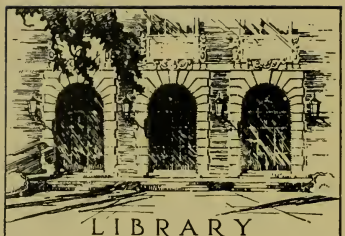

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THE WHITE SLAVE;

OR,

THE RUSSIAN PEASANT GIRL.

—

VOL. I.

LONDON:
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PREFACE.

THE writer of every romance and novel published usually looks forward, however diffidently, to that immediate popularity which may lead alike to fame or profit, or to the diffusion of opinions and ideas.

He may seek only to amuse or to move his reader, or whilst amusing, to instruct by the moral which his tale conveys, or thus to impart such information as the public might be disinclined to receive in a form less attractive.

It is to the attainment of these ends that the author of the White Slave aspires; and—anxious to popularize some knowledge of the condition of the Russian Serf among a people who sacrificed

twenty millions sterling to the enfranchisement of its own Colonial blacks—he has been desirous of rendering his book amusing, as the readiest means towards effecting this object.

The personages whom he has called into life in this story have been introduced, not to aid the writer in effecting a conquest in the domain of fiction, but as the types of classes, and as the vehicles for conveying an impression to the world of a state of things, which nothing will tend so much eventually to alter as the public indignation, however slow the remedy.

He has only used the privilege of the novelist so far as the chronological arrangement of his matter was concerned, and in shifting the scene as well as the period of real events—such as the anachronism of the death of the great Russian poet, or the execution of the sectarian, or making a tavern near St. Petersburg the theatre of violences, which, in reality, took place in the vicinity of Warsaw.

At the same time, he begs it to be distinctly understood that he has taken no farther liberty

with the anecdotes relating to any of the personages named, and that every incident interwoven in his tale is founded on reality, every imaginary character compounded from real characters; that, whilst endeavouring to sketch, as vividly as his powers of description and his personal reminiscences would allow, the spirit of some Russian institutions and a few of the most prominent classes of the Russian people, the author has never ventured to quit the regions of probability, unless when he was adhering to a literal, though startling, truth.

He must lastly observe, in vindication of certain opinions, which might otherwise appear far-fetched in the mouth even of an educated peasant, that the derivation of the Sclavonians from the race of Sur, and the curse supposed to weigh upon them, are quoted from one of the most illustrious of that people—the poet, the philosopher, the orator, the sage Mickiewitz.

The slave is made, in fact, to epitomize the theory, by which Adam Mickiewitz, in the

unhappy aberration of his powerful intellect, sought to explain his belief in *Messianism*, (or continuous and present revelation,) in the last course of lectures, which cost him his professor's chair.

June 1st. 1845.

THE WHITE SLAVE.

CHAPTER I.

It was between the acts of a favourite opera, the attention of a little knot of exquisites, distinguishable amongst the vulgar Parisian audience of the pit, was obviously directed towards a box, which seemed singularly to attract their notice and curiosity. This box contained one solitary inmate, a lady in all the luxuriant bloom of beauty; but a cane, an opera-glass, and a Spanish cloak upon a chair, seemed to indicate that a cavalier had just left her.

It was not the first time during the evening, that the eyes and opera-glasses then turned to-

wards her, after travelling eagerly round the house, had settled dubiously and inquiringly upon that very box; but its two occupants up to that moment had been so concealed by its curtain, that they could see without being seen. But now, the curtain being withdrawn, suddenly revealed to the full gaze of those who an instant before were struggling to obtain a transient glimpse, the object of this anxious scrutiny.

The lady whose appearance acted so magnetically on all these eyes was not unworthy of attracting them; she was beautiful, and of that stamp and degree of beauty which no variety or singularity of taste can cavil at or deny. Why attempt to describe that expression—the soul and spirit of beauty—which is to loveliness of countenance what the odour is to the flower—which it is obvious that words can never paint, any more than the pencil can depict the perfume of the rose; or at least let us leave the description to the enthusiastic lips of a lover? But it may be observed that her beauty was in that rich maturity, which some women never reach, and which others only attain in exchange for

youthful freshness. Girlhood and womanhood in her seemed mingling their attractions, reminding one of those rare days in spring when a midsummer's sky shines forth in all its radiance upon the ground still fresh with rain, and fragrant with young vegetation and early blossoms. Though rather dark than fair, her aspect and complexion were purely English. It was of that darkness, which not owing its origin either to any Hebrew or to any southern admixture, but to the blood of Celt and Norman, is almost exclusively found in England; dense raven locks and eyebrows contrasting with deep blue eyes. It was peculiarly the style which foreigners most appreciate and admire, because to them so unusual and exotic. The pensive expression of her countenance, the soft languishing glances of those eyes fringed with long black lashes, appeared to indicate that romance of disposition, which was required to realize their ideal of a fair islander.

The tasteful splendour of the lady's attire, so well according with the gorgeous nature of her

beauty, was considered to add to it in the estimation of her admirers. Their enthusiasm was farther excited by the eager curiosity with which she gazed upon the brilliant scene around her, as she drank in, in one intoxicating draught, the universal admiration she evidently excited; for all eyes at first directed towards her by the notice of the group before alluded to were rivetted there by her own uncommon attractions.

But if she accepted this homage with an undisguised and almost undignified delight, her joy sprang from no direct or selfish vanity; for that night, radiant with love long thwarted and now unexpectedly crowned, she gathered the universal approbation, which no feminine simplicity could mistake, with no other sentiment than that of pride, at its rendering her more worthy of the one being in whose smile all the golden opinions of the world for her were concentrated.

But the little knot of spectators who had first patronized her with their admiration,

judged otherwise. Whilst their glasses still guided their inquiring glances round the amphitheatre, they had been able perfectly to distinguish two figures in the box, though they could not discover whether she were one of them, or not.

When she drew aside the curtain, and appeared alone, it was not very unnatural to conclude that she had not dared to do so whilst her companion was beside her. At all events, they evidently considered her as an unhappy *belle* held in odious privacy by some tyrannical protector.

"Who is she? What is she?"

"She is *ravissante!*" said one.

"*Quelle mise!*" observed another.

"She is an Englishwoman—a Miss Mortimer—a wealthy heiress."

Whilst a third, by remarking: "Did you ever see a beautiful bird more anxious to fly from its cage?" even more obviously spoke out the common opinion.

Very prominent in this group were three

individuals, with whom the young lady's appearance seemed the subject of a wager.

"I knew," said Hippolite de L—, "that I was right. I told you she would be here to-night. Trust to my information in such matters!"

Hippolite de L—, the speaker, was a Parisian "*élégant*," of the period of the Royal Guard, before the progress of Anglomania had driven the *élite* of male fashionables to imitate the costume and manners of the gentlemen of England—that England where traditions of taste and good breeding, of the chivalry of the Sydneys, and the polish of the Chesterfields, have been perpetuated undisturbed by revolutions.

In France the storm which swept away all the frivolity accumulated during the reigns of the last Louises, had scattered the French nobility in abject exile; its next generation, reared in penury, were deprived not only of rank and fortune, but even of their great names, eclipsed by all the brilliant deeds of the children of their fathers' serfs and lacqueys, which threw far into the

shade the exploits of their Turennes, their Condés, and their Saxes. They returned, by the grace of foreign bayonets—not like the triumphant cavaliers at our own restoration, who had been driven from England, village by village—but to assume their borrowed consequence from the light of a royalty so soon and suddenly about to be again extinguished. Then were to be seen great names associated with plebeian manners, and with tempers soured into the braggadocio swagger of the Empire, by the consciousness of the national dislike and contempt.

Hippolite de L— was one of those endeavouring to mix the hectoring of the "*grande armée*" with the "*papillonnage*" of the monarchy, but having of the "*Grand Seigneur*" nothing but the name, and the blood which flowed in his veins. He did not therefore contrast advantageously with either the Count Z——— or the Prince Ivan.

The former, brought up at Oxford, was, like Hippolite, in himself a living argument against the theory which bestows too readily on races qualities inherent in them. Hippolite, whose

ancestors had enjoyed through the reigns of the Montespans and the Pompadours the high privileges of the "*tabouret*," showing in his person in one generation the loss of that high breeding which a French lord was once supposed to imbibe with his mother's milk; and Z——, the Muscovite, converted by early education into a thorough Englishman—a fact more startling than the subjugation of the first tiger by Van Amburgh.

But Z———, though an Englishman in aspect, in manner, and in feeling, was a Russian magnate by position; like an Athenian in old Greek history, with his eloquence, his love of arts and of liberty, yoked to the chariot of a Scythian. He has since been distinguished for his unfortunate duels, and for the recklessness with which he scattered an enormous fortune to the winds. His features were open and noble, and he was distinguished by a head of curled hair of unusual length and density, which gave him an eccentric and a somewhat lion-like appearance.

The Prince Ivan, his countryman and

compeer, was in everything a Russian. In person he was not uncomely; tall, and well proportioned, his features were tolerably regular, notwithstanding the sallowness of his thick, sclavonic skin; deriving its tint partly from the hot-house temperature in which Russian children ripen into precocity, but more from habitual excesses. His face had too the defect of nearly all Muscovite countenances—that of showing too much the nostrils; and it bore the characteristic almost as common, of the cat-like or Mongolian position of the eyes, slanting downwards towards each other.

Those eyes were in themselves the most repulsive of his features, from their astute expression; at least as taken in conjunction with his other features. They were dead and opaque, and of that pale leaden hue, which alarms and startles more than even all the pitiless ferocity which is disclosed by the transparent organs of vision of the feline tribes. Thus the filmy orbs of the blind, when rolled in the expression of passion, are more menacing than if flashing with

the utmost brightness of hatred, because the known is less dreaded than the unknown danger, and we are accustomed to look into the eye, as a sort of mirror, which must at some instant paint upon its disk the inmost thought; it contracts for a moment, even previously to the most sudden pounce of the cat or tiger; and with the certainty of that instant of warning, one may look into it with defiance. But the dull, dead eye, reflecting nothing—the window of a mind into which it can never give the faintest insight, though we know it by the play of the features to be cunning and malevolent, inspires us with the same nameless dread and horror as the aspect of those cold-blooded, loathsome things, from which, harmless as they may be to man, we dread the contact of some hidden venom.

Indications of weariness and disgust—the results of dissipation or a sickly constitution—were mingled with a sort of jubilating cynicism, into which the former had perhaps degenerated; they were permanently imprinted in every line

of those muscles which give to the human countenance its chief character. They were conveyed, too, by the intonation of his voice, when not by his words.

There was in Prince Ivan's whole demeanour a certain sort of insolence, before which men and women quailed, and which seemed to realize the crapulous impertinence with which we hear some of the nobles of the monarchy stigmatized in the memoirs of the day; but to the seignorial complexion of which plebeian vulgarity could never attain. One would have been tempted to imagine that one of these characters had been perpetuated, and transmitted through two generations to the prince, by some ancestor whose barbarism was forced, by the rude hand of Peter the Great, to take the impress of a *roué* of the regency, just as the impression of all civilization has been taken in Russia, superficially minute in every external. It owed its origin more probably to the habit of seeing others wince beneath the triumphant sarcasms of one himself unassailable, because callous to most that others dreaded—one

regardless where he tramped, reckless what animosities he roused.

Nature had given the Prince wit; and a Russian education, teaching him to weigh his words, had preserved him from the loquacity in which a Frenchman would have diluted it. Habit had made him equally skilful in wounding with the tongue, or steel, or lead; the instinct of an envious disposition taught him unerringly to use the first, and wine supplied him with factitious nerve to wield the latter. In his own country there were a thousand terrors to cause him to bridle this unhappy humour; but abroad he was only subject to the political *espionnage* which all Russians of his rank continue to endure; and there was no cause why he should restrain its indulgence. Just now too he gave, as well as his two companions, most ample evidence of being flushed with wine; and although he bore it well, by increasing his personal recklessness, it disposed him to give the full rein to his temper.

This somewhat lengthened explication was necessary to elucidate the scene about to follow.

Hippolite de L—, whom we left speaking, continued :

" Well, you will, at least, allow that I have won this wager. Is she not worth more pains-taking than an opera queen ?"

" Fame," said Z———, taking a long look through his glass, " has not belied her. Now she has vouchsafed to shine out, like the sun, from a cloud, she certainly outshines."

" And like the sun," observed the Prince Ivan, whose leaden eye was resting upon her, " you say that she is unapproachable ? I don't believe it. That woman is to be won in half an hour."

" What !" said Hippolite, " when I have watched her, or had her watched, by day and by night, these three weeks, without catching sight of her till now !"

" You must have shown either want of skill or timidity ; so I will suppose you were too timid."

" Timid !"

" Oh ! not afraid of the Blue Beard who keeps the lady in thrall ; but timid, perhaps, in addressing her."

"'Sdeath! Prince—you who sit and look on at the chace, why don't you try yourself? At least, a woman must be seen, or spoken to, or written to, before she can be won. Now Z——— knows that yesterday, in the midst of my breakfast, I heard that she had driven out. I was on her trace in an instant; and, behold! the blinds of her carriage were drawn down. This was the chance afforded by a whole week's *espionnage*."

"So you sentimentally alighted, and kissed the track of her carriage-wheels. You will make way thus."

"I was so timid, that as a last resource, I drove against her; you should have heard the crash! I lost a wheel, I smashed a panel of a new cab; but at least I brought her to the window, and won my wager, that I would show her to Z———; though he disputes it."

"You do not," said Z———," explain that she put her head out of the window *veiled*."

"Well," replied Hippolite, laughing, "so it was; but what is to be done with a *fille si bien gardée*. Just as I sprang to my feet and was

commencing an apology, Blue Beard, who had recovered from his shake, regardless of her sympathies, made her draw down the blind, and called out to drive on, leaving us in the midst of the wreck!"

"I think the attempt was bold and well considered," sneered the Prince, "if the cab had been your friend's, and you had been sleeping partner to a coach-maker. But I still hold, that the lady being clearly under some restraint, and not by her looks unwilling, there must be a way to get at her. You have been on her trace for weeks, and you have never exchanged words with her. All you know of her is so contradictory as to amount to nothing. You know she is English, you know she is beautiful, and that she is reported to be rich; at all events, that he or she must be so. You know that he exercises a tyrannical influence over her; you know that she is either a sister, a cousin, a niece, a daughter, a wife, or a mistress. You know, it is true, nothing of his station in life; but you have ascertained that he is certainly an Englishman, unless he be a Swede, or a

Swiss, or an American, or a Dane, or a Dutchman."

"No;" said Z———, "his success has not been brilliant."

"If I had been as much interested in the matter," observed the Prince, "I would have been as far advanced as he is in an hour."

"A gasconade:—try it."

"My dear fellow, I have tried it; it is only five minutes since I caught sight of her, and I appeal to Z——— whether I have not made as much progress in this adventure as you have—which is none at all."

"I am afraid you want enterprise, young man," said Z———.

"I so much want enterprise," replied Hippolite de L—, "that who will wager me I do not go straight to her box and obtain a signal mark of her favour?"

"What do you call a signal mark of her favour? Something as intangible and invisible as the glances with which she has distinguished you?"

"No; I will obtain that rose-bud nestling in

her bosom, or I will kiss her lips before the whole audience."

"Oh!" exclaimed Z———, "any ruffian might rush into a lady's box, and snatch a rose, or ravish a kiss!"

"Yes;" observed the Prince. "I'll answer for it there are plenty of fellows about the pit-door, who would attempt it for a handful of louis, with the certainty of kicking and incarceration for their pains."

At this moment he turned suddenly round, and the lady in the box waved her hand, and then hastily recovered herself. It was obvious that some resemblance had deceived her for an instant. The sudden pause in the very midst of the little sign of recognition, and her perceptible embarrassment, rendered this evident. But Prince Ivan unhesitatingly kissed his hand.

"Now by the modesty of the eleven thousand virgins," exclaimed he, "if I am not the fortunate individual whom the lady most distinguished by her notice! Listen, gentlemen:—to improve on Hippolite's proposition, hold me a bet upon the matter, and I go into her box;

with her own white hands she shall detach that rose-bud and give it to me, and then I will close the curtain, and you must take the kiss for granted. Mark me, I do not mean to go in to her as Hippolite proposed—to raise an uproar, and be turned ignominiously out. It shall all be with her own free will: as a test of which, I will sit and converse with her for ten minutes after."

"This is too much presumption," said Hippolite. "I hold that wager."

"Well, anything from a supper to a thousand louis."

"I hold it for a hundred louis. Such a gasconade should not be taxed at less."

"I have none of the blood of Gascony in me," sneered the Prince; "but you will observe, my dear Hippolite, that the success of my wager will not depend on the mere audacity of a highwayman snatching at a purse. I am going not to outrage, but to conquer. Will you, Z———, be umpire to the bet?"

"Oh willingly. The lady is to give you that rose, and you are to remain ten minutes next

her without being turned out; otherwise the wager is lost."

"Exactly."

"You are going to lose a hundred louis, and I to win them," said Hippolite; "but curse it, if for a hundred louis I would frighten the pretty bird, or make its jealous owner shut it up altogether."

"Oh!" replied the Prince, "you should have thought of that before."

"What if I pay forfeit?"

"I will not take the whole sum as forfeit, as I mean to give it to my valet."

"What if Blue Beard returns?" said Z——.

"Then I must play Selim," replied the Prince. "But it is very unlikely. Did you not observe that she kept the curtain close so long as any one was with her. Depend upon it, she would have closed it again already, had he been yet expected back."

"Don't call upon me for help if I see her footman thrust you down the lobby," said Z———.

"Better pay forfeit and give up," said Hippolite.

"Gentlemen, adieu! I will give you each a rose-leaf," replied the Prince, as he disappeared through the pit door.

Blanche Mortimer still sat alone. It was true that the last words of Mattheus as he left her had been: "Dearest, do not let yourself be seen, or we shall be again annoyed and followed." Blanche smiled a promise; but she belonged to the same sex as Eve, Pandora, and the wife of Lot. She was a thorough woman; that is to say, a compound of those latent qualities which make men heroes, mixed up with habitual weaknesses and waywardness, which prevent us from respecting, to incline us perhaps the more to love their possessor.

The door of her box opened, and a stranger stood before her; for an instant she mistook him for Mattheus. He was the same she had just before mistaken for him in the pit. But the resemblance was one of those general likenesses, of build or figure, which vanishes into the strongest antithesis on detailed examination.

The leaden eye, the sardonic smile, the decayed teeth of Prince Ivan, could not be, for longer than the subdivision of a second, mistaken for the blue eyes sparkling with enthusiasm, the open countenance, and the pearly teeth of Mattheus.

"Sir!" she said hastily, but in a very sweet voice, "this is a private box."

"Not very private, Madam, considering that the eyes of the whole house are upon us."

"Sir, you are in error," said Blanche.

"Believe me not, Madam," replied the Prince, and he sat down. "You see beside you an unhappy wight, bewildered, intoxicated, maddened by your charms."

Blanche rose in terror, and was about to call for assistance; but the Prince snatched hold of her wrist, and kept her down upon her chair.

"Your servant is removed; so also is the box keeper. Hear me for one instant, or you will occasion a scene before the whole house. One instant's patience, and I leave you!"

"Mattheus! dear Mattheus!" involuntarily

murmured Blanche, who sank into a chair, almost fainting with alarm at his violence and the energy of his language.

"Queen of Beauty!" said the Prince, "your dear Mattheus has left you alone, like Ariadne, and so will I in an instant if you continue to require it. But first hear me! I am a desperate man. I have vowed either to commit suicide, or to bear away that rose whose hue and sweetness are shamed so near those lips."

"Oh, Sir! what have I done that you should thus insult me? Unhand me, or I will call out to the company!"

"Madam, I am desperate! I will kiss those lips before all the audience if you do. Give me only that flower, and I depart."

"Unhand me, Sir! You crush my wrist in your grasp!"

The Prince let go.

"Oh, heavens! I, who would die to save you a moment's pain! But remember my determination! Give me that flower to worship as a relic in the solitary hours of my despair!"

"Oh! whoever you are, let me entreat you to leave me! Mattheus will be here directly, and there will be murder!"

"Then do you prevent it. You are an angel; be an angel of peace! Give me that flower, and I depart!"

Blanche looked hurriedly round her. She detached the rose-bud, and said almost imploringly: "Will you go?"

"Yes, on my honour! To be plain with you, it is a wager."

"Here, then!" said Blanche, in an anguish of terror at the scene her imagination conjured up, "if Mattheus should suddenly return;" and she handed him the solitary rose-bud.

"Now, go! go! go!"

Prince Ivan bowed low, and twirled the rose-bud aloft, to show it to his backers in the pit; for by this time those around Hippolite de L— and Z——— were betting on the results of his enterprize. Then he kissed it, put it in his bosom, and sat down beside the lady.

There was a movement of approbation amongst those who were to win by his success

—of some disappointment amongst those who were to lose.

"Ah!" said one, "what folly! Now I recognise her—she is his old mistress."

"No more," said Hippolite, "than she ever was yours."

"Harkye!" said another, whose chivalry was stimulated by the prospect of loss. "I call it disgraceful. If the lady has no cavalier to take it up—I will."

"No, that is my right!" quoth Hippolite.

"Well!" said Z———, "we should call that in England a bet cleverly hedged, where a man is safe to lose his life, or his friend, or his money. I don't think it will be his money; look, he is sitting down quietly beside her; she listens to his pathetic pleading; and I don't think it will be his life, if Hippolite goes out with him."

Meanwhile, the Prince having received the flower, had not offered to move. He remained for a minute in mute admiration of Blanche's beauty, which at first he had scarcely thought of observing.

"Oh, Sir!" said Blanche, "you promised if I gave you that flower, you would go!"

"Did I?"

"On your honour!"

"Yes, so upon my honour I will; but not yet."

"Oh, this is infamous!" said Blanche. "I will call out if you do not leave me;" and her terror at this pertinacious persecution caused her voice to belie the menace of her words, as she sank back into her chair.

"You know the penalty," observed the Prince; "but, in fact, my wager is to sit ten minutes beside you, after I have obtained the flower."

"Oh, mercy! he will be here!"

"In eight minutes I go, although unwillingly. Take patience till then, since I must then take patience to leave you."

"Oh! this is cowardly, unmerited! Go, Sir! or he will be here."

"What, do you fear him then?"

"What! fear Mattheus?" exclaimed Blanche, bewildered by the stranger's conduct. "Go,

Sir! leave me! I command you!" and again her voice sank with her courage. "Go—I implore you, go!"

"Hear me, Madam!" said the Prince. "I came to win a foolish wager—a paltry hundred louis. I have remained—my senses ravished by a beauty I had never dreamed of. I have learned to feel that the greatest sacrifice on earth must be to quit your presence. Forgive my audacity. Let me have the happiness of meeting you—wherever—whenever you may name, and I leave you this moment. I forfeit my hundred louis, and I yield up six whole minutes, which spent near you are of inestimable price."

A bright flush of crimson succeeded to the pallor of Blanche's cheek. "How dare you, Sir, insult me thus!" She rose so resolutely that his hand, which again clasped her wrist, was powerless to detain her on her seat. But all her energy seemed so wasted by the strength she had put forth in this effort, that the cry for help she attempted to utter died upon her lips.

"Ha! Madam," said the Prince, as with one hand he still held her, whilst with the other he rapidly drew the curtain, to mask her resistance till he could again pacify her. "Sit down! sit down! or I will kiss that very scornful mouth!" He passed the other arm around her waist.

"Oh, help! help! help!" screamed Blanche in an agony of terror.

Help came. The door opened, and Mattheus stood before them.

There was that resemblance between Mattheus and Prince Ivan, that they might possibly have passed for brothers, but at the same time all the widest difference that health and sickliness could make, betwixt a frame enfeebled by long excesses, and one Herculean in its youthful vigour.

The blood still flowed freely through the minutest vessels, to tinge the skin of Mattheus with the flush of passion; the angry veins, obedient to the throbbings of the heart, still swelled into protuberance upon his forehead, and his eyes still flashed the light through the clear

lymph of their living orbs, as he stood for an instant in amazement, confronting the intruder.

The Prince Ivan was scarcely for an instant disconcerted. He instantly assumed the position of a man resolved to answer for his deeds. Nothing could exceed the reckless, insolent defiance of his looks.

The first movement of Blanche, forgetful of herself and of her outraged dignity, was to rush between them. She knew, or thought she knew Mattheus, and she dreaded from him the angry leap of the tiger upon its prey; but by a strange, yet natural feeling, all the warm blood rushed back to her heart when she saw him stand transfixed before the arrogant aggressor, his lips quivering with irresolution.

She who would have hung upon his arms to avert the fatal blow which might recoil upon himself—she who would have rushed to meet the stroke intended for him—now stood mute with unspeakable anguish, when she heard him parley, in a tone, common-place and cold, with the ruffian whom he had seen with his arm around her waist.

"What do you here?"

"What do I here?" replied the Prince, ironically; "your words are rough — speak civilly."

"Begone!" said Mattheus, "leave this box!"

To Blanche in that moment seemed withered the illusions of years; then the thought flashed across her, that the man, whom in the imagination of her first love, she had exalted into a hero, was perhaps a coward—one who dared not protect her against a creature she had dreaded to see crushed like a snail beneath his indignant heel.

Mattheus grew deadly pale; it was plain that his fear must be very intense, to quell the suffocating anger which almost choked his utterance.

"What do you here?"

"What do I here? I came to ask this lady for a rose-bud: here it is," said the Prince, who drew it forth and insolently pressed it to his lips.

"Go!" exclaimed Mattheus, his voice tremulous with passion. "Go! quit this box!"

"Not yet," replied the Prince, coolly. "I have wagered not to cross the threshold of that door for ten minutes."

"Begone!" said Mattheus, his voice still involuntarily rising, "or be the consequences on your own head!"

"Perhaps," answered the Prince, "the world may think fit to consider them on yours."

"Once more," exclaimed Mattheus, "go!"

"What, and lose my wager?"

"Hear me—then!" said Mattheus, who threw back his arms, as if to ascertain with what facility his costume would allow of his using them. "You shall quit this box, and yet not cross that threshold."

"You are witty, fellow," said the Prince, "how so?"

"Thus!"—thundered Mattheus, and then followed the pounce of the tiger, as he sprang upon him.

The pit had been looking anxiously on; the interest of the scene had extended beyond the little circle originally cognisant of what was passing. They saw the lady attempt to rise, and then the curtain had been closed upon them, to their visible disappointment. One minute elapsed, and then another. The voices of the disputants had been too low to reach the pit, excepting in an indistinct murmur.

At length the exclamation of Mattheus burst upon the house in a stentorian roar—the curtain was rent aside—the Prince appeared struggling in his arms for one moment, and then was hurled headlong into the orchestra.

There was a sonorous crash of lamps, of fiddles and bass-viols, two musicians were stunned under him, and the Prince Ivan, to the universal horror, lay stretched above them pale and lifeless, the blood gushing from his mouth in a red polluting torrent. Mattheus, with starting eyes, and the attitude of a gladiator, still vindictively shook his clenched fist at his fallen enemy.

But so general was the sympathy with his

provocation, that a voice in the pit—it was Z———'s—cried bravo! and that bravo, bravo, bravo! was repeated by many scores of voices.

CHAPTER II.

Even Blanche, strange as it may seem, was still as ignorant as the reader of the station, parentage, or country of Mattheus, although he was her favoured suitor—although she had resolved to exchange her name for his.

The reader will naturally conclude that either the lady was romantically and outrageously confiding, or that some unusual circumstances must have marked her acquaintance with him.

Something of both had led to the singularity of their relative position. Two years before,

Blanche Mortimer, then an orphan under her uncle's care, had met Mattheus travelling in Italy. Some of the chances, or mischances, of their wanderings, had first brought them together, under those trying circumstances which enforce temporary companionship, and often lead to intimacies which, from their incongruity, could never otherwise have been formed.

Experienced English travellers, like all travelling foreigners, know exactly when to avail themselves of pleasant road-side acquaintance—where gracefully to drop it. Ralph Mortimer, her uncle, was one of these. In addition to a perfect knowledge of the world, he was too heedless of it, and too selfish either to care for the character of his society, so long as it proved agreeable, or to dread the least restraining delicacy or difficulty in getting rid of it whenever, at any stage of mutual intimacy, it should cease to be desirable. As he happened to be a man of refinement and of extensive reading, travel, and information, his tastes preserved him from derogatory association; but provided these tastes

were not outraged, he would sooner have made a companion of an amusing pickpocket, than of a prosy Doctor of Divinity. When, therefore, he learned to relish the society and conversation of his new acquaintance, he made no effort, after the first repulse, to penetrate the palpable mystery of his country and position; a forbearance which seemed duly estimated by the object of it.

Mattheus was designated as a subject of the United States, in the passport which on the continent attempts to carry its arbitrary scrutiny so impertinently into a traveller's privacy; but he always readily, and almost anxiously, explained that he had only assumed that character for the convenience of its protection. Regarding his real country, his answers were always playfully but pertinaciously evasive. Although he spoke English faultlessly, it was plain, from certain peculiarities, rather of intonation than of accent, that he was no Englishman. But this negative information was all that could be gathered from the most attentive study of his conversation or manners. All the principal

European languages--the French, the Italian, and the German—he spoke so as to deceive even the practised ear of Mr. Mortimer.

Mattheus admitted his knowledge of the Russian and Polish: tongues, of a common root, but differing so widely from all others not of Sclavonic parentage, as rarely to be mastered by a foreigner; and here there seemed a clue to the question of his nationality. But then, on the other hand, it appeared that, with the facility of those who have acquired proficiency in several idioms, he had made himself acquainted with various dialects, as hard to learn and as useless to possess as the Russian or Polish to a Frenchman or German.

On everything that could indicate his social position, he was equally silent; but this could hardly remain a matter of mystery as absolute as his country. His conversation at once induced the conviction which prolonged intercourse confirmed beyond a doubt, that he belonged to, or had chiefly mingled in, the society of those classes which we conventionally call the higher.

Many more solid accomplishments, beyond his familiarity with languages, attested the sedulous cultivation of his intellect. He possessed them, as Mr. Mortimer regarded and expressed it, notwithstanding his skill in many tongues, which he argued, perhaps not unjustly, to be always acquired at the expense of higher knowledge.

"Words," he said, "are but the symbols of ideas—in most men the ideas are wanting; and not unfrequently when they do possess them, the paucity of words wherein to clothe them, reduces them to inutility. If a man, instead of gathering ideas, of which he can never have too many, or mastering the words of his own language to array them in, will learn nine foreign tongues, besides his own, he only knows at last ten ways of expressing what he could have expressed as well before; and nine tenths of the labour which might have stored his mind with facts and fruitful deductions, has been wasted to garner up barren sounds."

But Mattheus had apparently availed himself

of this faculty of communing with men of different nations, by its most useful application: that is, by striving to acquire through it a knowledge of their habits, feelings, and spirit, and of the literary treasures of their respective languages. He had seen all that was worth seeing in every country; he had lived in almost every capital of Europe; and he was constantly betraying his acquaintance with the most remarkable society, political, scientific, or literary, which they contained.

Mr. Mortimer, whose early years had been spent in diplomacy, found in his new companion a man versed in the scandal and secrets of cabinets; called secrets, because confined to a coterie, which alone possesses a key to render them intelligible, in its knowledge of the characters, motives, and antecedents of those to whom they relate. He found Mattheus not only an enthusiast for the fine arts, but one of the most intelligent cognoscenti he had met with, and a successful collector of all those objects of virtu, which Mr. Mortimer still admired, but in which

the expense of more sensual gratifications no longer allowed him to indulge.

The acquirements of his new and pleasant acquaintance were so varied, that his conversation and companionship were equally agreeable to Mr. Mortimer in discussing a theme of speculative science, the beauties of a picture, or the merits of his cook. Mr. Mortimer, indeed, at first felt, if not piqued, at least astonished, to think that his experience and sagacity should be so much at fault as not to enable him positively to discover even the country, rank, or standing of Mattheus; but he soon discarded all solicitude or thought upon the subject, contented with his first conjecture, that he was probably a Pole or Russian, and certainly the scion of some noble house, whose illegitimacy caused him to be unacknowledged, or whose political opinions had driven him to seek concealment. Poland, Russia, and Italy, were just then full of secret associations, some of the threads of whose entangling meshes were often discovered by the vigilance of the governments against which they were plotting.

It sufficed for him, that he had never met an individual whose society—for Ralph Mortimer neither believed in nor would have coveted friendship—was more agreeable to him. If he had often found more brilliancy, he could never hope to fall upon the same yielding deference with which Mattheus submitted to his opinions, his caprices, and his humours.

Although it is true that the pleasure of being near Blanche Mortimer, who was just then budding into womanhood, would alone have sufficed to repay Mattheus for these little sacrifices to the egotism of his host, they were as much occasioned by the gentle submissiveness, which occasionally giving way to fits of exultation, was habitual to the nature of Mattheus. He became a constant visitor; if he had any occupations or profession, he neglected or abandoned them, to follow from town to town the Mortimers, after having each time taken a formal and final leave.

Ralph Mortimer was the last male descendant of an ancient family, decayed, but not like an old tree, whose branches wither, through the

gradual impoverishment of its degenerate sap. The last members of his fallen house had still continued to exhibit the intellect, the courage, and the virtues which had led to its original distinction, but largely mingled with the vices, the follies, the extravagance, and insanity, which predominating, had blasted its prosperity, reducing its blood to that which flowed in the veins of Ralph and his brother's daughter, and its once vast possessions to Ralph's personal wealth. This, his present fortune, was sufficient to allow him on the continent the gratification of every sensual enjoyment, without the attendant state which, in England, is usually connected with a certain luxuriousness of living, but which abroad may be dispensed with.

Ralph Mortimer had always been thoroughly selfish. He had not the reputation of being so because his ability taught him, in the very interest of his egotism, to conceal it ; he had even passed for generous in the early part of his life, when he squandered half his fortune. Habitual amenity of manner still caused him to be thought benevolent.

It is unfortunately true that the very pantheism of self-idolatry is compatible alike with the most powerful as with the meanest mental capacity. The brightest intellect is frequently allied to unalloyed and exclusive selfishness; just as, descending a step beneath the lowest scale of humanity, we see even in the most gross and grovelling animals a temporary abstraction of self-instinct in favour of their young. It is born in the heart: the head has nothing to do with its existence, though its weakness may be careless in displaying, its wisdom solicitous to conceal it. Its wisdom feels that all that men most inwardly revere and venerate, must take its origin in some abstraction of this love of self—an abstraction which folly only doubts, or obtuseness dares entirely to disavow. It feels that there is no possible independence in the social state, in which a man can venture without danger, or at least without inconvenience, to forfeit all the sympathies of his kind by such a disavowal.

The egotism of Ralph Mortimer was absolute and complete; but as he was no fool, he was

not boastful of it. His strong reflective powers, and his acute perception, left him indeed, in feeling, still below the level of the brute, because he would have been incapable of transferring his self-affection beyond the narrow limits of his own heart, even to his immediate offspring; but he wished to appear as if it was overflowing towards all mankind.

Though always fond of money, Ralph Mortimer had never been avaricious. He never confounded the representative sign with the enjoyments it represented. He laughed at the miser, calculating minutely every day's interest of his wealth, and ever mindful of his securities, yet not only forgetting all the while that death hourly threatened the deprivation of all his store, but that every year he kept it hoarded, according to all insurance tables, a tenth, a twentieth, a thirtieth of life's brief span was inevitably escaping, with its opportunities of enjoyment; thus reducing in equal ratio its value.

In his youth, Mortimer had used his talents assiduously, and lavished his wealth fearlessly, in the pursuits of ambition and of love, or what

he called so. But these were then untried gratifications. He tried and he exhausted them. Love soon wearied him with its incessant calls for reciprocation. Ambition to him, who possessed already the means of all sensual pleasures, had nothing to offer, excepting the opinion of his fellow-men, which he despised; and thus, with all the opportunities of greater if not better things, he sank into a mere epicurean.

He had calculated justly, that by the time one half his fortune was spent over the green baize, on the turf, and behind the scenes, his diminished appetites would be amply supplied by the remainder. As he had foreseen, it did suffice to enable him, as he changed from one delicious clime or scene to another his place of sojourn, to roll along in the softest and most convenient of travelling carriages, attended by the most thoughtful and obsequious of valets, and preceded by the most skilful of cooks.

When Mortimer had led for years the joyous life of Sybaris, the conscientious satisfaction of the pious, just, and easy-minded man depicted on his cloudless countenance, he began to find

that with all his wisdom he had made one great mistake. He remembered that money, which he once deemed could purchase every thing but life, or health, or appetite, could not buy affection. He had once imagined that the simulation of it—the most marketable of all commodities—would do just as well.

But manhood, though it walks in spirit as in frame erect and independent, seeks for some staff to lean upon, when changing into age; like those dissolving views, where the luxuriant scenes of summer first begin to fade into winter's cheerlessness. It seeks, as its blood chills, to sun itself in those warm beams which only importuned the brow of manhood when they fell athwart it. Thus, in the first days of Ralph's autumn, he began to feel that when old age, and age's childish imbecility should have stolen far upon him, the indifferent glances of paid menials, or their purchased interest, would bring but cold and sorry consolation to the discomforts of declining years. Thence grew, if not the want or wish of loving, the longing to be loved by something. He felt a void

and hollow in the heart. The time had come when self no more sufficed to self. A new desire had sprung up in him—one which he was indeed surprised to feel, but which, instead of combating, he hastened to gratify before it was too late.

Ralph Mortimer's only brother, with whom he had, years since, quarrelled, had died, some time previously, a sudden and violent death, leaving unprovided for, an orphan daughter in the most interesting age of childhood. Ralph sent for, and virtually adopted his niece. This adoption of the last of the name and family was only what the world expected, but it discerned the generous warmth of benevolence, when a man so long surrendered to his ease, took at once to himself the lonely child, just as a bereaved and doating father would an only daughter, instead of leaving it to complete an education, so difficult for an indolent and inexperienced single man to superintend.

Blanche was winning as a child, as she afterwards proved fascinating as a woman. Her enthusiastic nature clung eagerly, like a creeping

plant, to the nearest object. Never could frigidity and selfishness have fallen on a more easily excited affection, to soothe and warm it with its grateful attachment. She would have loved any one who seemed to take an interest in her—even through much unkindness. Ralph was the only person who appeared to do so, and he was never unkind. Indeed, his sole object being to be loved, he spoiled her more than the fondest parent would have done. It was his principle never to contradict her; and he was too indolent to persuade, or even to advise her. Her governess soon sank into a mere toady, and was early dispensed with.

The acquirements and accomplishments of Blanche were all those to which her unbiassed tastes and inclinations led her; her opinions, such as chance brought before her, and her own feelings led her to adopt. The society in which her uncle mixed, and into which the child, with a favourite's privilege, was always admitted, gave to her conversation and her manners the ease, and grace, and dignity,

which a woman may indeed sometimes attain in after-life, but which are commonly acquired, like her mother tongue, insensibly—as men must always have acquired when they possess them.

The temperament of Blanche Mortimer was romantic and poetical; that is, she was born with an acute sense and perception of the morally and the physically beautiful, and with an imagination which, if it did not go the unsound length of picturing it by an hopeless inversion where it obviously is not, still fancies it wherever uncertainty leaves the possibility of its being. Without being ever ecstatic over the common-place, she could not have looked upon a vapour clothed valley without painting to herself some scene of beauty or of splendour hidden by the mist; and just so did she view the human heart and mind, with its clouded motives and inspirations; too prone to dream and imagine all that would have charmed her own.

Just as Blanche was growing into womanhood, her uncle lost, with his declining health

his relish for society; consoled, for selfishly withholding her from it, by the reflection that, at least, it would not wean her affection from him. For he had grown very jealous of this affection, which he had reared so artificially like a hot-house seed; not, as he knew, in the natural warmth of corresponding feeling. The penetration which would have modified, on closer acquaintance with life, the notions formed in the poesy of a girl's imagination, was thus never called into activity in this retirement, which was first broken by the visits, and then by the intimacy of Mattheus. When her uncle admitted this exception, he failed to take into account the risk to the exclusive attachment which he had fostered; though if he had, he would scarcely have foregone the gratification he derived from his growing relish for the stranger's society.

Now it happened, just as in the nursery tales, where tyrannic fathers and jealous bashaws keep beautiful princesses carefully locked up, and undeviatingly veiled,—that when this precaution is for one instant neglected, they are

sure to love at the first glimpse and to be loved by, the hero of the tale; so this one exception to their solitude proved fatal to the wish of the uncle, and a source of sweet disquietude to the heart of the niece.

Blanche, with her warm and tender disposition, was exactly at the age when woman is most inclined to love. The fondness lavished on her doll, or on her greyhound, had long since given way to her attachment for her uncle, and this, which would at best scarcely have sufficed to fill her bosom even in the absence of any more natural affection, was rendered, by the utter want of sympathy between them, less than she would have felt towards any other being. Her ardent and expansive feeling recoiled instinctively before his cold and selfish cynicism. She who was in spirit so often with her ancestral Mortimers, bearding the Stuarts in their wanton prosperity, or charging beneath the desperate banner of the Cavaliers; arrayed against the tyranny of James, or gathering to the Pretender's pibroch—ruined by graceful profusion, or dying in some lady's

quarrel—men always reckless of their lives and fortunes;—she was hourly shocked by the mean and petty egotism of Ralph, so perceptible, however well concealed, because pervading the minutest actions of his life. She could not help reflecting how wide the difference between Ralph and all these illustrations of their house—Ralph, who, not content with differing from, was wont to pull them rudely from their pedestals in her imagination, by proving too provokingly the knavery and folly of which, notwithstanding his unanswerable proofs, she would have considered the conviction little short of impiety.

At this juncture, when yearning for sympathy, the eagerness to love pent up to overflowing in her enthusiastic bosom, like the overcharged electricity in a thunder-cloud, ready to flash into life, she found at once in Mattheus, enthusiasm and sympathy, and an object to love. She loved him. Seen, even without the prism of her youthful illusions, she might have done so; but viewed through it, he became the impersonator of all the heroes of her romantic dreams. He had the golden hair,

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and the blue eye, and the athletic figure of the north. He was still young, though far enough beyond his boyhood to have derived from the stirring scenes and ardent passions of life, the meditative seriousness imprinted on his brow and clouding its natural serenity—the proud, yet sorrowful aspect, the gentle gravity of his demeanour, inspiring interest whilst imparting a dignity in advantageous contrast to the vivacious frivolity of the southern men.

Mattheus was loud in his admiration, keen in his appreciation, of all that Blanche appreciated and admired. Versed in her favourite poets, he could follow her through them, and point out their beauties, where Ralph's invidious sagacity could only find out faults and flaws. Not only was the poesy, but alike the music of every nation, familiar to him; he felt and understood it; and added to this feeling and knowledge another natural gift, a deep harmonious voice. He could translate and sing to their wild accompaniments, the ballads gathered amongst the Highland *palicares* of Greece, or amongst the

mariners of the bright isles of its blue seas, or the plaintive wail of the Moorish women of the coast of Barbary, or the songs of Russ or Polish serfs, melodiously monotonous. His glowing words could eloquently paint the scenes of all these sounds.

But Mattheus' life was a sealed book full of romantic mystery. Nor even her persuasion could make him throw entirely open one of its closed pages. Indeed he had early extracted a promise, that she would forbear to question him regarding a painful past; but then he told her much disjointedly, which put together, turned into glowing certainties her uncle's suppositions, and with the clue which they had furnished, she always thought that she could read the outlines of his story.

Firstly, Blanche could not help observing, that calmly as Mattheus regarded everything in life, more as a benevolent spectator than an actor in its scenes, there was one startling exception. On the subject of oppression in all its shapes, his gentle nature

kindled into fire, enthusiasm lighting up his eye, the warm blood starting to his cheek. This theme sufficed to call galvanically into life all the emotions, which his philosophical tranquillity seemed long since to have deadened. His premature indifference here gave way to the ardour of youth, reckless of reason, and urged only by its fiery impulses, disdaining to persuade by argument, but carrying conviction by its own conviction and its eloquent invective.

This subject always at once aroused Mattheus from his habitual supineness, into the expression of a restless and almost a ferocious thirst for action. When he threw back the hair that usually shaded his forehead, there appeared the traces of a cut which had left an indentation deep enough for the finger to have been inserted. This he had once admitted to have been his first blood shed in defence of the oppressed.

It was then with resistance to some public oppression that his early life was connected?

There was also a singular mixture of caution

with this enthusiasm into which he lashed himself so easily, alike on reading the negro horrors of a newspaper paragraph, on witnessing the daily petty tyrannies of the Austrian incubus in Italy, or even in contemplating the statues of the slave breaking his chain, or of the dying gladiator. Never did he venture upon one animadversion on any established authority—even that of a Turkish pasha—without glancing first suspiciously around, to assure himself that there were no eaves-droppers. It was thence plain that he had been long accustomed to be watched.

But when assured of being only in the presence of Ralph's indifference and of Blanche's eager interest, he dwelt with feeling on the wrongs of races, of nations, and of parties, and alluded with delight to all the daily symptoms of the storm then brewing up against the Holy Alliance, the Charybdis against which European progress had wrecked, in dread of the Scylla of half a century of anarchy and rapine from which it was escaping.

From this war of opinion, which Canning

had prognosticated, and which was then on the eve of its partial fulfilment in Western Europe, Mattheus always insensibly reverted to the condition of Poland and Russia, and to the narration of certain episodes connected with the vast conspiracy by which the nobility of these countries fruitlessly sought to emancipate themselves from the tyranny of their Tsars during the last years of Alexander's reign. These episodes he depicted in such vivid detail and with such feeling and regret, that it was difficult to doubt that he had witnessed, suffered, and acted in them.

Besides the indications afforded of his station, by the lofty reserve of his manners, and the nature of the social reminiscences to which he was constantly recurring, indications rather strengthened than weakened by his advocacy of human equality, strenuous but so utterly divested of all personal envy or bitterness, an accidental circumstance had confirmed beyond a doubt the presumption of his elevated birth. On some occasion he had taken out and opened his watch. The quick eye of feminine curiosity,

which delicacy and good breeding taught Blanche to conceal, but which was perhaps only whetted by this concealment, had rapidly discerned a ducal or a princely coronet, with the inscription in French: "To my beloved child, Mattheus. Warsaw, 1824.

Ralph Mortimer, who had long dismissed the subject from his mind, only observed on this discovery, that as he had originally conjectured, he was evidently some Prince from Poland or the Russo-polish provinces, where princes are plenty as blackberries, in political exile which imperatively required concealment of his name. But for Blanche, who had revelled early and unrestrained, in Shakespeare and in Walter Scott, in Byron and in Moore, till almost morbidly imbued with their romance, Mattheus, in his person, not only realised, but united, the attractions of the heroes she had dreamed when musing over her favourite volumes. She had been doubtful in her preference of the chivalrous knights of the middle ages, or the piratic and mysterious Conrads and Laras, or the romantic orientals who figure through liquid stanzas monotonously

glittering with the brightness of gems and redolent of the perfume of flowers.

Mattheus combined for Blanche Mortimer the gentle gallantry of Feramorz, with the patriotism of a Kosciusko and the chivalry of a Sobieski. Forgetful of the flight of time, her imagination involuntarily reverted back to that brilliant passage of the Polish history, where its celebrated king, heading the fiery nobles of the turbulent republic, saved in its death throes from the Ottoman grasp, that pretentious Empire which affects to wear the hereditary mantle of the Roman Cæsars. She could almost bring herself to believe that he was one of those magnificoes, blending the western chivalry and oriental splendour, whose gorgeous aspect and astounding valour had suddenly blazed before the citizens of Vienna in their almost hopeless need—dazzling as the flash, and blasting as the stroke of lightning to the triumphant Crescent—one of that famous host, bright with the steel, and gold, and jewels shining on its velvet and its costly furs, which charged beside the Danube to the rescue of Imperial Christen-

dom, and seemed—the eagle pinnions flapping in lieu of plume from helms and saddles—like winged horsemen upon flying steeds, to pounce on the astonished Osmanlis.

It was not surprising that Blanche, confiding and inexperienced, beset by the incessant homage of the man whom she had exalted into a demi-God, should love him with all the ardour of a passionate heart and of a vivid imagination.

Mattheus shared or seemed to share this feeling. He looked, and sighed, and almost spoke his love; it was eloquent in his voice, in his eyes, and in his actions, but never directly in his words. Some saddening reflection seemed ever to arrest him on the point of speech, and suddenly to chill his passionate admiration into mournful apathy.

The dread of Blanche was that the pride of rank might view in some exaggerated light the inferiority of blood of an untitled English Commoner; but as often her fear gave way to the pride with which she had taught herself to regard her ancestral name.

Ralph Mortimer was not slow in perceiving

this attachment, he was annoyed to see the affections of his niece drawn into an all-engrossing channel, but as he was not without remedies for the evil, he did not discourage the amusing visits of his guest. He simply, at last, moved on, as he had all along intended, to another city.

Mattheus took a gloomy leave, and Blanche felt like one awakening from a pleasing dream, the dream of first love, to a dreary reality. When the travellers had been, however, a few days installed in their new place of abode, Ralph began to miss the society of Mattheus, and none the less vividly from his niece's melancholy.

In this state of things Mattheus arrived; he was cordially welcomed; from Naples to Rome, from Rome to Florence, from Florence to Nice; he still took a final leave, he still followed, and he was still welcomed.

Ralph Mortimer, at last, gave up the remedy of migration for his niece's malady; but his knowledge of life assured him that he possessed one radical and certain means of cure, the withdrawal of the suitor, which he felt he could ac-

complish at any time; and then, he knew that though the patient might still linger in pain, the root of the disease was cut effectually.

The Mortimers had rambled on, still followed, though now by agreement, to the town of Ax: a little earthly paradise, imbedded like a gem in the hill-side, in the flank of the rugged Pyrenees. Ax, then the most charming of all watering-places, possessed (in the estimation of Mr. Mortimer) the advantage of being yet undiscovered and unhacknied by English tourists. It is mortifying to reflect that Mr. Mortimer should only share this opinion in common with all British travellers of experience and refinement, to whom the absence of their countrymen from any given locality, proves always a high recommendation to it; and one might thence deduce, that if decidedly the greatest and most remarkable, we are assuredly not the most amiable people in the world.

Ax lies on the track of one of the few rare passes which, through the higher Pyrenees, forms over snow in June a chief thoroughfare into Catalonia through the territories of the

worshipful republic of Andorra, the oldest commonwealth existing, and one of the smallest on record; its exiguity and poverty, perhaps, accounting for its age, dating its independence since the days of Charlemagne, and yet so long unknown to the rest of Europe.

Since Mr. Mortimer's visit it has been described in a "Summer's Ramble in the Pyrenees," by the Honourable Mr. Murray, the same who was recently killed by a grape shot, fighting against an overwhelming force of Borneo pirates.

The late Mr. Murray in his book, has doubtless described the watering-place of Ax, and therefore it probably no longer remains a spot sacred from the invasion of adventurous Smiths, and Browns, and Thompsons.

Then in its placid security, let the reader imagine a picturesque village, placed at the very point where the terrific sublimity of mountain scenery verges into the wildly beautiful. On one side are gloomy gorges, and high peaks covered with eternal snows; roads winding stair-case-like amidst rocks precipitous, and frothy torrents thundering amongst them, or leaping

angrily beneath the yoke of overspanning arches. On the other, blue hills heath-covered and wooded with patches of cultivation reaching to their summits, and vales between them with arrowy rivers winding amidst vineyards and maize-fields studded with villages and caserias.

Two rival hostelries, beside the wells, sufficed to harbour about a thousand summer visitors, consisting of the choicest society in France. Sleeping beneath one roof, and dining at one table, and spending their evenings in common, these visitors had tacitly agreed to waive all etiquette, and to consider themselves as one vast family party. In the morning there were rides in the romantic environs, there were rambles in search of mountain flowers and of the wild strawberry; whilst the breeze, cooled by the snows and scented by the balmy vegetation of the hills, was more deliciously refreshing.

There were the chase of the chamois for the adventurous, and the pursuit of the black cock, of the bartavelle, of the ptarmigan, of the quail, and of the red and gray partridge. In the evening there were gaming for the old and

covetous, and dancing, and moonlight walks for the amorous and young.

Ralph Mortimer, whose health and appetite had recently improved, found here materials for his cook to work upon in viands the most delicious—fish, and flesh, and fowl. Here was the peculiar trout caught only in the mountain streamlets, whose waters are born of the winter's snow and summer's sun; the unequalled venison of the chamois, fatted with browsing on the wild thyme, and on the aromatic Alpine vegetation; and the luxurious ortolan, melting like a fig over-ripe to the touch of tongue and palate.

So keen was Ralph's enjoyment of the scene and of the fare, that he felt again disposed to mingle in the society around him; and, under these circumstances, no longer needing the companionship of Mattheus, he decided on using his grand remedy to get rid of him. One evening late, he sent to request some private conversation with him on the ensuing morning.

There was something startling to Mattheus

in the unusual hour which Mr. Mortimer had fixed; it appeared evident that that gentleman had either some communication of importance to impart, or some explanation to demand, which he both guessed and dreaded to offer. He was deadly pale, notwithstanding all his self-command, when ushered into the room, where Ralph received him with his usual quiet urbanity.

Their conversation, whatever might be the subject of it, lasted for two long hours, during which Mr. Mortimer's valet was occasionally called; it even seemed as if, but for the interruption of breakfast, it would have been still further prolonged. Whatever passed during this interview, Mattheus re-appeared, not only relieved from his anxiety, but his countenance beaming with satisfaction.

"Blanche," said her uncle at breakfast, "Mr. Mattheus is kind enough to proceed immediately for me to Paris, to settle some urgent business; the carriage will be ready in an hour; I am sure he deserves our best prayers for his happy journey."

"I shall only pray for a speedy return," observed Mattheus.

"And when do you return to us?" hazarded Blanche.

"Not before a fortnight," said Ralph.

"Nor one day later," rejoined Mattheus.

The post-carriage drove up, one portmanteau had been packed, and his passport regulated by the Italian valet, and an iron deed box of Mr. Mortimer's was put under the seat. Mattheus looked in vain for the opportunity of one moment's *à parte* with Blanche; he was hurried in by her uncle, who, saying that he would not detain him, pressed his hand cordially, God-blessed him, and signed to the impassible valet, who shouted to the postillion to drive on.

"This day fortnight!" exclaimed Mattheus, speaking to Blanche, and away rolled the vehicle.

"Yes! this day fortnight, if ever, you will be back to us," said Ralph; but there was a sneer on his lip, and an emphasis on the words "if ever," which struck Blanche then, and caused

her many cruel suspicions afterwards. She did not venture more than to express her wonder at all this. Her uncle was the impersonation of what is called an impracticable man, and she knew the inutility of all questions.

One fortnight passed, but at the expiration of it Mattheus did not return; and then another, and another, and another elapsed, still bringing no tidings of him. Ralph betrayed neither surprise nor uneasiness, and it will readily be understood how, the more this inexplicable absence occupied her thoughts, the less she dared trust herself with any allusions to it in his presence.

There was, however, one circumstance which always left Blanche full of hope of his return, or rather which rendered the expectation of it reasonable; for how should anything but certainty or time destroy the hope of a first love? She was aware that he had left behind him his baggage, his books and his curiosities.

When Mr. Mortimer, with his fluency in French, his wit, his courtly manners, his lovely niece, and his reported wealth, once chose to

mingle with the visitors of Ax, his company was anxiously sought after. He was overwhelmed with politeness, and his niece besieged by admirers. But cold, disdainful, and indifferent, all their efforts failed to divert her thoughts from one painful and incessant channel. Her eyes still turned anxiously towards the road to Paris, and her heart still bounded at every cracking of the postillion's whips, which announced the arrival of a traveller.

If anything could have made her for an hour forget Mattheus, it would have been the flattering and enthusiastic admiration of one of the visitors, who might well have effaced the exclusive impression of her lover from a remembrance less faithfully tender than her own.

Count Horace de Montressan bore in a becoming manner one of the great historic names of France. The delicate cast of his youthful beauty was redeemed from effeminacy by the resolute expression of a short and finely moulded lip, by the flashing of an impatient eye, and by the highest aspect of animal breeding. The breadth of his chest, set off against his slight

and waspish waist, gave promise that his somewhat slender figure would ripen into vigour with maturer age.

The manners of Count Horace were as graceful as his person and his movements. His accomplishments, were all those one would have looked for in him. In character, impetuous and impressionable, he was hasty and incautious in forming, and obstinate in maintaining, his prepossessions or dislikes. He was possessed of all the valor and generosity which had seldom been belied in his race, together with a love of adventure, and a certain roystering recklessness of temper and of air, which was softened by the courtesy of good breeding and by natural kindliness.

Altogether, Count Horace was a brilliant cavalier. When to this it is added that fortune had not denied him the rare appendage to a foreign title—wealth sufficient to support its lustre—it may readily be imagined that his undisguised admiration of Blanche Mortimer excited no little envy.

Count Horace was the only visitor who was a

successful hunter of the chamois in a place where every one talked about it, but where few had the nerve or endurance to follow sufficiently far, the few native hunters, those marked men, who are often so possessed of the monomania of this occupation, that no earthly temptation could withhold them from its fearful fascination. There is a haggard dreaminess about them, induced by the solitary regions they frequent, by the high and rarefied atmosphere they are accustomed to breathe, which makes the air of the nether world seem sleepy and heavy to them; and perhaps by the consciousness of their inevitable doom—sure sooner or later to overtake them, and which has in most cases already decimated the families of those who entertain the fatal passion for this chase.

But it was in vain that Count Horace laid at Blanche's feet the trophies of his prowess earned in such company; in vain that he brought her bouquets of the frail alpine flowers which bloom in the mossy interstices of the granitic masses, swept bare by the winds, high above the region of eternal snows. It was in vain that he

artfully fashioned into personal homage, the violent Anglo-mania, brought back during a recent visit to England, and induced by circumstances we will in a future chapter examine. He still found that, although his efforts were appreciated, that he could neither gain one step towards dissipating the lady's melancholy, nor towards dethroning his supposed predecessor, with whose existence he was not long left unacquainted by the public rumour.

Count Horace was not the man to follow long an adventure so unpromising, so he sighed, raised the siege, and returned to Paris.

Count Horace took with him, to Blanche's great satisfaction, an old servant of her uncle's, who had become useful to him, and to whom we will venture hereafter to devote a chapter, as he may play no insignificant part in the denouement of our story.

At length, Count Horace was gone. One by one the visitors were all departing, and yet there were no tidings of Mattheus. The anxiety of Blanche began so visibly to prey upon her health

and spirits that even Ralph was forced at last to notice it.

"Blanche," he said one evening, "we hear no tidings of Mattheus." Blanche's lip quivered—her heart was too full for utterance. "He was a great admirer of your's, my child," continued Ralph. "He was what is called 'in love' with you; indeed with a little encouragement he would have asked me for your hand. Now though Mattheus might have considered himself agreeable to both of us, though his rank was possibly elevated, though he was not without fortune, and full of the romance and mystery calculated to work upon youthful enthusiasm, I, as an old man, knowing life generally, and foreigners in particular, could not help suspecting that my reputed wealth might influence his affection quite as much as my Blanche's merit or her beauty. Now, my dear girl, I never told you before, because how should you understand these things? It is years ago since my diminished fortune has ceased to supply even those mere necessities to which you know that I con-

fine myself. I was obliged to sink all my property to produce an adequate income; and consequently this income dies with me. You know, dear Blanche, that whilst I have it I will share it with you, and I hope to live long, that you may long continue to do so." Here the voice of Mr. Mortimer grew a little tremulous with emotion, though there lurked a waggish sparkle in his half-closed eye. "Now if I had told Mattheus the state of the case, shame or vanity might have prevented him from retracting an offer he would afterwards have regretted, and have made you regret, your whole life through. If, on the other hand, he became acquainted with the fact at a distance, and with due time for reflection, I, who know the true value of men's disinterestedness, felt satisfied that we should get rid of his suitorship. I begged him, therefore, to transact some business for me, with my agent in Paris, during the course of which, he could not fail to learn the true state of the case. Mr. Mattheus, or whoever really he may be, (for I felt too sure of the result of the trial to have taken the trouble of inquiring), was to

have returned in a fortnight. There is not a boarding school girl in existence who would not have staked her Christmas holidays on the event. But you see, my dear Blanche, that all the gilding of a girl's imagination does not alter the common-place of a reality, when we approach it. Mr. Mattheus, with all his romance and all his fervour, like most other men, has not the courage deliberately to face portionless beauty."

Blanche's colour came and went during this long explanation. At the close of every day, when that day's hope was closing, she had framed a thousand excuses for him: sickness, or dangers, or difficulties; and sometimes even the cruel thought had beset her, that pride of birth had conquered his affection, or that another had estranged it; but never had she dreamed of being abandoned on a plea so unworthy. She felt as if the tears that should have started to her eyes were gathering in her heart; and when Ralph ceased speaking she had fallen insensible.

"Ah!" said the old man impatiently, "scenes are inevitable wherever there are women."

He rang the bell violently, and then took out his toothpick and looked quietly on. But nobody answered his summons, and Blanche fell heavily from the sopha to the ground. Ralph now rang again more angrily, and stooped down to raise her up in his arms. He felt the blood fly to his head as he did so, and an instant giddiness and sickness came over him. His appetite had been good that day, and his dinner better. Still no one answered; the servants were standing at the door, around a muleteer, in noisy discussion on some rumour of the banditti of the neutral ground. At length a kitchen-maid came out to them.

"Has any one answered the Englishman's bell? He has been ringing ready to pull the house down these ten minutes."

"Ah!" said Mr. Mortimer's valet, "you idle rascals! Is that the way you do the service of the house? I will run myself, though I think, wench, you are dreaming; for Monsieur Morti-mere is not the man to be so silent if he had rang ten minutes back."

But the valet was mistaken; the uncle and

the niece were both silent, because both insensible. Mr. Mortimer's arms were thrown convulsively around her; the fingers of his right hand still clutched his toothpick.

Blanche was soon restored to animation; but they with difficulty extricated her from his grasp; for Ralph Mortimer was dead!

* * * *

Let the reader now imagine many months to have passed by, and Blanche to be at Versailles, in her worn-out mourning; without health, without fortune, without prospects, and without friends; for the charitable widow and her ugly daughter who had taken her as their companion, if friends, were very cruel friends; for hour by hour, and word by word, the moral torture they inflicted on her was like the sticking pins into a human heart at a witches' meeting. They hurt her feelings, they humbled her pride, they revenged by an arrogant assumption of insulting pity, the superiority which nature had given her over them. In a word, they made her eat the bitter bread of feminine dependence.

Blanche had almost ceased to hope. Of the

only beings she had ever loved, the one had ceased to live, the other to live for her.

One day a gentleman called. His card told his name, but his name told nothing. He inquired for Miss Mortimer.

"Are you Miss Mortimer?"

"Oh dear no," said Miss Acidula Vinegar. "You mean the young person under our protection?"

"Precisely," replied the stranger. "The young lady who has found a home beneath your roof."

"The young person to whom we have been very kind," returned Miss Acidula.

"I should wish to see her."

"Sir!" said Miss Acidula. "I have not the pleasure of knowing you. We do not know much of the young person, and I doubt whether the rules of propriety—"

"Oh! Madam, my business is no secret. I am a junior partner in the banking house of —. We have long had a very important communication to make to Miss Mortimer, and singularly enough, have just received another from a totally

different quarter, which appears even more urgent. I have been designated personally to wait upon her. I am charged to pay into her hands a sum due to the estate of her late uncle. I am also charged to give her two important letters, and to convey to her the intelligence that she has acquired, by the death of some remote connexions, the claim to considerable property. I have no personal knowledge of Miss Mortimer: this is my mission."

Miss Acidula alarmed Blanche when, without preparation, she threw her arms around her neck, and embraced her with all the warmth of sisterly affection—for she had always looked more likely to bite than to caress any one. The maid who was standing by, was satisfied that she had taken a malignant fever, and wished to spread it. Blanche heard the confused account of her good fortune, with as much magnanimity as she had endured these congratulations.

"I have so much to communicate to you, Miss Mortimer," said the banker, "that you must allow me to look to my notes. Firstly, then, I am charged to pay into your hands the

sum of a thousand pounds, due to your late uncle, on receipt of your discharge for that amount."

"And who could owe my uncle that sum?" said Blanche.

"One of these two letters will inform you."

She looked at the superscription:—it was from Mattheus!—Then, all the dignity with which she had resolved to bear her prosperity was forgotten; she tore open the letter and devoured its contents.

Mattheus still loved her. His forced and sudden departure for a distant land, whence he had hoped daily to return, and the sudden death of her uncle, had caused him to lose all trace of her. He had been indefatigable in recovering it; and now, if he had neither name, nor home, nor station, he could offer her at least his hand, his fortune, and his eternal devotion. In a postscript he mentioned that he had paid to her order the sum above-stated, the amount to which he was indebted to her uncle; but Blanche knew very well that Ralph had often boasted that he never lent or borrowed.

She had scarcely patience to read through the other letter, which announced her claims to an extensive property, together with the offer of a large immediate sum for the abandonment of her rights upon it.

Blanche did not think of comparing the date of her connexion's death with the date of her lover's letter. But as she did not doubt, she would have derived no additional satisfaction from this proof of his disinterestedness. Just as she had once judged him, he was willing to take her portionless, dependent, and an orphan; and she, the orphan, having proved his love, could accept him without scruple as the independent heiress.

It was six weeks after the above-named events, and within one week of the proposed marriage, that the scene recorded in the last chapter took place, in a crowded opera-house.

CHAPTER III.

We left Prince Ivan, in a previous chapter, prostrate amongst the broken lamps and stunned musicians of the orchestra. Let us now return to him just as he had been lifted up, not dead, but senseless; the blood still pouring through his mouth, and his limbs hanging powerless and loose, as if all broken and disjointed. He was laid at full length on his back, on one of the front benches, and the crowd pressed densely about those immediately surrounding him; his private friends, and the

medical men who happened to be present amongst the audience.

But there were two individuals who forced their way through the throng with an energy before which the most eager curiosity gave way.

The one was a venerable, grey-headed man, the other, middle-aged, distinguished in appearance, and remarkable by a green shade covering his eyes.

The elder of these individuals seemed in the deepest distress; he raised the Prince's head upon his keees, and clasping his trembling hands together, asked, with tears in his voice, if not in his eyes:

"Oh, is he—is he dead?"

It was a touching picture, as he encompassed the pallid face of Ivan with his arms, to see that old man's sorrow, as he raised his eyes implor-ingly to Heaven; and his companion with the green shade looked on, just as a connoisseur surveys an interesting picture.

"Gentlemen," said the famous Doctor B—, "unless it be the bones of the trunk, which is

indeed, but too probable, there is nothing broken; the skull is intact, the limbs are all sound; we must move him instantly, for we cannot exactly strip him here."

"That," said the Commissary of Police, "would be an *attentat aux mœurs*, at least in the pit or boxes; nudity is not quite permitted, even upon the stage."

"Then let us move him at once, bench and all, without waiting for a stretcher," said the Doctor.

"One moment, Sir," observed the Commissary; "can you assure me that this man is neither dead nor very soon about to die? because, if either were the case, it would be my duty to note down the exact position of the body, and to secure the broken lamps and fiddles, to bring in evidence to secure the murderer's conviction, which you will admit, gentlemen, to be more important to justice than whether one man lives or dies."

But they did move him into the lobby, and there they bled him.

"See, see!" said the good old man, "his eyes move—he opens them!"

"I'll bet a hundred lou—lou—louis," uttered the Prince Ivan, half choked with the blood as he spit it out, and then he closed his eyes again.

"We won't be premature," said the doctor, "but still I think—hand me the cold water—that our patient will shortly be very much better, unless he should become decidedly worse."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Prince, opening his eyes this time full wide. "Where am I?"

The doctor held the glass to his lips. He drank, and the blood was dexterously and quickly removed from his face.

"Ah, Hippolite!" said the patient; he paused for a moment in pain, and then continued: "What a cursed fall, my friends! The front of my head is beaten in, I think."

It was evident that he was entirely restored to his senses.

"Now Heaven in its mercy be praised!" exclaimed the good old man.

"Ah, ah! Grippe, is that you?" said Ivan.

"Heaven be praised he is saved! and so I leave him," said the old man, and he shuffled away, like a sorrowful and angry father turning from an unworthy son, whose danger had for a moment disarmed his just severity.

"What! afraid of blood, old bloodsucker?" shouted Ivan, feebly, but jeeringly. "Are you off, old cent per cent?"

"Heaven be praised for his recovery!" muttered the old man, "when one thinks that I hold in this pocket-book his engagements for three hundred thousand francs."

"Oh! it is Grippe, the money-lender," said a bye-stander.

"You see, my friends," observed the Prince, with a sickly smile, "that if this mishap proves fatal, you may put without scruple 'sincerely regretted' on my tomb; only don't add 'by all his creditors;' that will be understood."

"I must enforce rigid silence," said the doctor. "I must enjoin you not to speak a word; though I really don't think that blood is from the chest."

Let us now follow the man with the green shade to the box, where Blanche Mortimer lay insensible for the second time in her life, although already for the second in these chapters. Mattheus, whose furious passion had subsided into the reaction of depression, was by this time in the custody of two municipal guards.

"I arrest you!" said the commissary, with all the dignity of a Roman Consul, but not till he saw the prisoner's arms secured. "I arrest you, miscreant, in the name of the law! Who are you? what are you? what led you to the perpetration of such a deed?"

There were several strangers who had forced their way into the box.

"It was justly done, if not mercifully," said one. "I will bear testimony to the provocation he received."

"I am Sir Thomas Blunt," said another. "Byegones are byegones, and whether right or wrong, we can't recall them; but I will bear witness to the provocation too."

"Who are you?" repeated the Commissary.

"Don't answer him!" exclaimed Sir Thomas,

"you must not criminate yourself; a rascal like this has no more ideas of fair play or justice than a pole-cat; he'd make you twist the rope to hang you by; but I am sure the man is not dead after all."

"Not dead!" said Mattheus. "Thank God!"

"That is right," quoth Sir Thomas; "don't bear malice, if you do break bones."

"Ho! there," said the Commissary, holding the door of the box, "no one must come in."

But the gentleman with the green shade had got in already.

"Who are you, prisoner, for the third time?" inquired the police functionary.

"Mattvei!" said the man with the green shade, in a language which no one else understood, but at which Mattheus started and turned deadly pale. "So it is you! What has possessed you?"

"The devil!"—replied Mattheus gloomily.

"Sir," said the Commissary, "you are speaking a language to the prisoner which I do not understand."

"Pardon me," answered the gentleman with the shade, "but conversant as a man of your externals must be with every European tongue, I forgot that you might not understand this one. It is American; my friend is American; he can speak no other language."

"I am neither fluent in the Chinese nor American," observed the Commissary, "but perhaps you will ask him in his own jargon, what he says for himself."

"Do you know whom you have killed?" continued the stranger, in the strange tongue.

"A Russian," replied Mattheus, "I know it."

"And do you know, wretch, who he is?"

"Not I—I only knew him for a Russian, by the oath he swore, as I flung him from me."

"Oh! Mattvei, Mattvei! you had better have been at the bottom of the mines of Nertchinsk, than at this night's work."

"Is he dead?" said Mattheus.

"Worse than dead!"

"Worse!" echoed Mattheus.

"You did not know him?"

"No, on my soul—who is he?"

"Not only a Russian, but a magnate. What would you give to hush up this fearful business?"

"*Here* it is impossible," said Mattheus despondingly.

"Impossible if he were dead; but he is not dead; I have just seen him; he is not perhaps much injured."

"Oh, if it *were* possible!"

"It is so; you are not more in my power than he is."

"What does he say with all this?" inquired the impatient Commissary.

"My friend says simply, that the thing was accidental, or that the poor sufferer must have thrown himself over."

"Bah! we know better," said the Commissary. "Your friend prevaricates in American, Sir."

"He says the patient will corroborate his statement; and now I remember, I think his first words were to that effect, when he recovered from his swoon."

"We shall see; I don't believe it."

"Now," resumed the stranger in Russ, "what will you give me to make your victim speak the only words that can exonerate you, and prevent exposure?"

"Any thing."

"No, name a figure."

"Ten thousand roubles."

"Good bye," said the stranger, "I am off to bed."

"Twenty thousand!" said Mattheus.

"Good night."

"Twenty-five!"

"A pleasant evening to you."

"Ah!" said Mattheus, "you are another devil tempting me. What is your price?"

"Say thirty!"

"Thirty," said Mattheus, and the stranger vanished.

When he penetrated again to where Prince Ivan was, the latter was perfectly self-possessed, though talking very fast, with the loss of blood and the excitement.

"I think," said the surgeon, gravely, "that I

may congratulate you on one of the most marvellous escapes it has ever been my fortune to witness in thirty years' practice. There is nothing broken—nothing—but the bridge of the nose."

The Prince bit his lip through, as he heard the titter of his friends at this announcement; but he was determined they should laugh with him, as well as at him.

"You, doctor, could have afforded it better; but when, like myself, a man has not much nose, it is disagreeable to have it further flattened and effaced."

"Sir," said the Commissary of Police, "since you seem thus far recovered, I should like to hear some statement of the facts that led to this atrocious attempt."

"Ah!" said the Prince, almost savagely, "what can we do to him?"

"Why," replied the Commissary, "if it should unfortunately happen that you live and recover, I am afraid that there is not much to be done, excepting fine and long incarceration."

"You would not surely take the law of him,

when you have brought his violence upon yourself?" said Z——. "I see only two courses, worthy of a man of honour, open to you."

"Which?"

"The one is to forgive."

"The other?"

"To revenge it personally."

"Oh! I may have appetite for that hereafter; meanwhile, let us pay back annoyance by annoyance;" and the Prince pointed to his nose, which the doctor was still bathing.

"Come," he continued, "Mr. Commissary; I am desirous of prosecuting this ruffianly assassin as far as the law will allow me, and you will please to spare no expense in collecting all the necessary evidence."

"It is a very grievous case," said the Commissary.

"Have you got writing implements about you, to note down my statement."

"Dear Prince!" said an insinuating voice, at the sound of which Ivan started, as if he had been bitten by an adder; it was that of the man with the green shade.

" One word with you."

And the stranger stretching out his long neck, hissed into Prince Ivan's ear, for the space of several minutes. When he had ceased, the Prince turned again to the Commissary and repeated:

" Are your writing implements ready? Then write down."

" I listen," said the Commissary.

" That Prince Ivan Ivanovitch, a Russian subject—"

" On the third day of January, anno 1827, between the hours of ten and eleven, post meridian," suggested the Commissary.

" Exactly," continued the Prince; " being in the Opera House, in the city of Paris, in the department of the Seine."

" In the department of the Seine," repeated the scribe.

" Being in the box No. 19, was moved by the caprice of the moment to sit upon the ledge, when according to the laws of gravitation—"

" According to the laws of gravitation? We do not recognize that code in France," interrupted the Commissary.

" Never mind," said the Prince ; " write on. Having lost his balance, he tumbled over. That is all he has to depose."

The Commissary looked aghast and blank.

" Excepting that he was much indebted to the politeness of a stranger, who kindly exerted himself to prevent the possibility of his throwing himself down—a service which Prince Ivan Ivanovitch proposes to acknowledge in a fitting manner, in proper time and season."

" That is as it ought to be," said Z——.

" It is well done," said Hippolite.

" Since this is the case," observed the disappointed Commissary, " I do not see how we are to detain the prisoner ; in fact there is only one event in which we should have the happiness to see the law vindicated, for I find you are determined to screen him."

" Which is that ?"

" If your bruises and contusions should take a turn, and terminate fatally."

" Thank you," said Ivan.

" But now I bethink me," observed the Commissary, " if it was accidental, you are liable for all the damage done to the broken glass and fid-

dles. I must go and see; I don't know how the musicians may choose to view it; if they consider it in the light of an assault, to wit, that you made use of your own person as a missile weapon, it may become a question of Correctional Police; for a man has no right to throw his own body, any more than any other missile instrument, at the head of any one."

"Oh!" said the Prince to his friends, "on reflection, we cannot leave the punishment of the most ruffianly brutality, to the quibbles of the law and its myrmidons; at least, whilst we can chastise it with our own right hands."

CHAPTER IV.

In Mr. Mortimer's establishment, though fitted with such luxurious economy to his personal comforts, there had still lingered one supernumerary, in the person of an English groom. He was one of those characters who consider it derogatory to their dignity to *appear* satisfied under any possible circumstances, and he happened just now to imagine that he had much real cause of dissatisfaction. Bob Bridle was a little, spare, hard-featured man, sinewy and wiry as those Scotch terriers that you may

suspend by one leg in the air without their yelping or wincing. You could no more have looked upon him, even if you had disguised him in a judge's wig, or in full canonicals, than you could upon a saddle, without mentally associating him with the idea of a horse.

But though he was only half the size of an average man, Bob Bridle considered that his bulk had been the chief bar to his advancement in life. He came of a stock—the Bridles on the one side, and the Horseflys on the other—who appeared for generations to have been bred for the stable, and to a studied undergrowth. Now Bob had been considered as a great, overgrown, weedy exception, who did no credit to his breed. His relatives disowned him—he weighed a stone and a half too much.

Brought up in the monastic severity of a Newmarket training stable, he was punctual as clock-work, and secret as the grave, particularly in every thing that regarded horses; no one but his master could ever have extorted from him the admission that the one he was riding was positively a mare or a gelding, a chestnut or

a grey. He was a faithful, if not an accommodating servant. Though he never professed attachment to his employers, his great moral maxim of "doing justice to the nags" led him insensibly to do his duty by their masters.

Nothing could more forcibly indicate bodily agility than his frame, or insensibility to pain, danger, or persuasion, than his countenance. He looked as if it were impossible either to hurt his body, to frighten or impress his mind, or to unlock his tongue.

The costume of Bob, in cut and fashion, was strictly professional. His sandy whiskers were close shaven, his hair clipped short; his white cravat, his shorts, his top-boots, or gaiters, were always the pink of neatness.

Bob's opinions were peculiar and decided. It could not be said that there was any thing in the world but a thorough-bred horse which he admired. There was much about which he had not made up his mind; but there were three things for which he had an utter contempt —soldiers, foreigners, and trowsers. Although he was in his own person a remarkable example

of the sacrifices sometimes entailed upon poor humanity by dire necessity — necessity, the "mother of the world," as the metaphysical Shelley calls it—nothing had ever induced him to wear a garment he so much despised.

Though in the early aspirations of his ambition in the training stable, Bob had often looked with contempt on the meaner branches of his profession, his evil stars had made him outgrow the hereditary leanness. He became too heavy, and he was obliged to descend to where he had looked down. At length he went abroad with Mr. Mortimer as groom, in charge of two thorough-bred hacks. But he was doomed to fall still lower in his self-esteem, when Mr. Mortimer sold his horses.

From that time forward, Bob looked and felt as lost, and as much out of his element, as those unhappy ducks kept in the height of summer, dusty and disconsolate, afar from genial horsepond and from running stream. He was now reduced to the charge of the English travelling carriage. With what pride and pleasure he grew at length to wash

and furbish it, and breathe upon the varnish of its panels, as he wiped it with his clean dry leather, and hissed to keep it quiet! With what jealous vigilance, when upon the road, he regarded every officious blacksmith approach it at the post stations! As Bob boasted, he was "up to them;" he had even suffered a month's imprisonment for chastising on the spot a burly son of Vulcan, who was over anxious to make work for his own smithy.

But at length Mr. Mortimer sold even his travelling carriage, and there remained only the English corkscrew, the cutlery, and his own tops and leathers, on which he could possibly occupy himself, without a moral derogation to which he would not descend. He obstinately refused any other branch of employment, or to meddle with any article of foreign construction or invention, in any manner, from packing a carriage to polishing a silver spoon.

Mr. Mortimer at length took courage to dismiss Bob; but it was agreed that he was to continue in his service until their arrival in

Paris would enable him to obtain a situation in some English family.

Now Count Horace, during a recent visit to the government stud at Tarbes, had purchased an English thorough-bred horse, about to be sold by the stud-master on account of its peculiar and ungovernable temper. It was a powerful, fiery, grey steed, with the size and bone of the English breed, and the gazelle eye, the distended nostril, the curving neck, and the tail of an Arabian. The temper of this beautiful animal was certainly capricious, and had been teazed into vice by mishandling. All idea of riding the horse had been long abandoned as chimerical, and even the attempt to curry him had been long given over. He had not inaptly been named Lucifer; for he looked quite as proud and almost as wicked as the fallen angel, when he tossed back his mighty crest and neighed defiance.

The Count having been in England, knew that it hardly amounted to a proof of vice in an English horse, that he should have been found unmanageable in a foreign stable. He caused

Lucifer to be brought to Ax; but by the time he had gathered vigour from a day's repose, he succeeded in puzzling all the ingenuity of his owner.

Bob Bridle had seen the horse: his eyes, which had rested so long contemptuously on the foreign specimens of horseflesh, were at once fascinated. Not only did he discern at a glance his blood and breed, but found that he was full of "points." When he saw him seize with his teeth, and kneel upon the man who attempted to rub him down, he declared "that he was playful as a kitten." That night he actually dreamed of the grey: he dreamed that the noble horse was in a nice "loose box," and that he, Bob Bridle, was littering him down. This was the greatest flight, either sleeping or waking, ever made in Bob's imagination, when he pictured in his dream a little paradise, and let his fancy people it.

The next day, Bob took up his position at the door of the inn, from whence he could command a view of the barn-like stable in which the Count's horse was quartered. Bob's

long-waisted coat of prince's mixture, his red and white striped waistcoat, his well cleaned leathers by Hammond, and his tops by Thomas, all looked better than new—as they should with every careful groom—because they had taken the set of his figure. Truth to say, there was a little plot in his mind, of which the previsions were realized. When the Count ordered his English horse to be led out of the stable, his eye fell naturally upon the English groom.

"Oh!" said the Count, "you are an Englishman I see; and Mr. Mortimer's servant, I suppose."

"I am so," replied Bob, politely pulling his fore lock.

"Then," proceeded the Count, "you are the very man I want to tell me something about this horse of mine."

Lucifer was led forth; but he had so damaged his reputation as a pacific animal, that he was brought out like an unmanageable bull, by four men, two and two, pulling at him by a rope from the headstall.

The grey horse screamed rather than neighed,

as he tossed back his silvery mane, in indignant contempt of the terror he excited, and tore up the ground with the angry pawing of his hoof.

"He is a fine fellow, is he not?" said the Count, "at least, to look at; for we can neither curry him nor ride him. It is a pity, for he is young, vigorous, of the noblest blood, and without a blemish—a perfect horse."

"He has points," replied Bob; "but we don't just tally in *our* ideas of a *perfect* horse with yours."

"How so?" inquired the Count.

"Why, Sir, as far as I see, foreign gentlemen buys horses for the faults they have not got; we buys 'em for the good qualities they have."

"Upon my word I don't know that you are wrong."

Bob proceeded, as if it was his wish to be instructive as well as agreeable.

"They are like those folks who won't have a hanimal at all, unless he is examined and warranted sound by a great veterinary; they don't know, Lord help them! that there are not five

horses quite sound in a hundred, and that those five are sure to be amongst the worst score of the lot."

"Well, what do you say to him?"

"Is he thorough-bred?" inquired Bob, critically.

"Can't you tell by his appearance?"

"No, Sir; nor any other man breathing. He may judge that a horse is thorough-bred or *almost;* but the difference between *quite* and *almost* makes the cocktail. Now a three-parts bred cocktail may often *look* more thorough-bred than a thorough-bred his-self."

"What, do you mean to say that no judge can tell?"

"It is not on the cards, Sir, no more than he could swear by looking at a neatly-mounted whip, whether there was a cane or a whalebone inside of it."

"Well but, my good friend," said the Count, a little puzzled, "if a horse not quite thorough-bred looks so like a thorough-bred, what does it signify whether he is so or not?"

"Because he only *looks* so," replied the groom. "Like a whip, whether there's a whalebone or a bamboo inside of it, when you know the stuff it's made of you know what to expect from it. Now, Sir, if that grey horse is a cocktail he'll only train to last for one mile; if a thorough-bred for four. If he is a cocktail, his bones are bones, and all the training in the world will only sweat off his muscle, and leave his fat; but if he is a thorough-bred, his bones are ivory, and his fat will all train down into muscle as hard as a crow-bar."

"Well, then," said the Count, "I can tell you that he *is* thorough-bred."

"How?" said Bob.

"Out of two of the most famous horses in England; I've got their names somewhere."

"I'd try and remember them," said Bob. "It don't look 'andsome to forget one's horse's pedigree when he's got one. I am sorry to say, Sir, they imposes dreadful in England respecting horses on ignorant people, 'specially foreigners. They sell 'em a horse, and gives him a pedigree

by Mousetrap out of Blacking-bottle, or some such names as never was in the stud-book any more than in the Bible."

"Well," said the Count, good-humouredly, "I think I can find it in my pocket-book; seeing is believing."

"Now," continued Bob, who thought that in a quiet way he was reading a great moral lesson—"now, when a humble individual like myself sees gentlemen so uncommon particular about their own pedigrees—which always *may* run crooked, no blame to *them* for it either—I can't help thinking why they shouldn't be more particular about those honest creatures, horses. A slip in his own breed don't much signify to a man, barring if his skin's iron-grey, or his head woolly; it won't make any difference in his training, as ever I see; but a wrong cross in the blood of a horse prevents his being ever trained at all, to speak of."

"Why not?" said the Count, highly amused.

"Because, when you begin to give them their gallops to get their fat off, they refuse their food in a few days, and you *must* leave off

training. But what I mean to say, Sir, is this here: what more business have horses with names that aint in the stud-book, than human beings with names they are not christened by?"

"Come," smiled the Count, still searching in his pocket-book, "you forget the Jews and Mussulmans, who are never christened."

"Well, they *have* no business with Christian names either. If a squire or a farmer *will* call his horse something when he runs it for the hunter's stakes, why don't he call him Clod or Dobbin; but he oughtn't to be let to give them fine thorough-bred names—classical, as I once heared a schoolmaster say—like Endymion, or All-round-my-hat, or Wide-awake—and 'specially not to sell them to ignorant people, who knows no better, as if they was in the stud-book."

"Well, our grey horse's sire is at all events; here is all about it, page and volume, stud-book and racing calendar: the name of his sire was Swap."

"And a thundering good horse, too," said Bob; "now for the mare."

"Dam by Leda—whalebone blood—"

"Ah!" said Bob, whose mind seemed relieved from a great weight, and who now turned to examine attentively the horse on whom he had feared to waste too much sympathy. "Is he quiet?"

"What a question," said the Count, "don't you see?"

The horse snuffed up the air through his black, distended nostrils, which glowed inside like a piece of red hot iron, and his shrill neigh was sonorous as the blast of a trumpet, as he bounded at the end of his cord, like a wild beast struggling with his chain. Bob Bridle went boldly up to him: the horse seized him by the shoulder, and tore out a piece of his coat and shirt in his teeth; but Bob dexterously avoided the blow of his fore-legs, and having got his hand about the halter, alternately he struck him with his doubled fist, and soothed and patted him.

"Ah, what! ah, would you! Now then!"

The long-accustomed sounds of an English voice, and the handling of the groom, soon reduced the fury of Lucifer to playful ebullitions

of snapping with his teeth, and giving *cow's-kicks* with his hind-legs.

"He is a real beauty," said Bob, as he felt his legs down, "and as sound as a roach."

"Is a roach particularly sound"? said the Count.

"You take one up like a hard and sharp," said Bob; "but did you, Sir, ever see a roach that was spavined, sprung on the fore-legs, broken-winded, ring-boned, or even wind-galled ?"

"Never," laughed the Count, "in the whole course of my experience. It is a pity he is such a temper."

"I don't know nothing about his temper."

"Don't you ?" said the Count. "Look at your coat."

"Oh, that is nothing," said Bob; "I dare say the horse knowed I ought to have took it off. Besides, Sir, consider what your own feelings would be if you was held by the halter like a wild beast by four jabbering foreigners. Why Job his-self would have turned rusty on his friends."

"I wish we could curry him," said the Count.

"I'll curry him, Sir, if you like, when I've taken my coat off."

"You'll be a devilish good fellow, if you will."

"Couldn't you put a saddle on him?" suggested Bob.

"I don't know," said the Count; "but I am sure we can get nobody into the saddle, unless you will mount him."

"I'll try," said Bob, "when I have dressed him; but perhaps you'll excuse my riding in my sleeves; my tops and leathers is my own, and so are my bones, and so is my time just now, by Mr. Mortimer's kind leave; but my coat is his'n, and I shouldn't like to get it further damaged."

"Ride him in any way you like," said the Count, "if you think he *can* be ridden; and if you do, get on him at once; we can see about his dressing afterwards."

"As you like, Sir," answered Bob; "but not just here; we must get him off the stones. I speak more for the horse than for myself; he'd likely hurt his-self, since he is so fresh; and even

for a Christian's bones a grass field is softer to fall upon."

"I should have imagined," observed Horace, "that to get on the back of that devil, you must have been one of those riders whom nothing could unseat."

"I'll tell you what, Sir," said Bob, "I've often heeard people say as how they never see the horse as could throw 'em. Perhaps if they was to say they never *got on* to one as could, they'd tell the truth. Now, Sir, *I* never see the horse I wouldn't ride myself, barring he was a lame un or a screw; but it is my opinion that if I was a gentleman I would never keep a horse that *couldn't* throw me if he set about it."

"You mean by a screw, an unsound, damaged horse, I believe," said the Count; "why do you call him so?"

"Well, Sir," answered Bob, "if you come to that, what do you call a horse a horse for? But them as knows the walley of nags, knows the walley of words as well as most people. Isn't a screw, Sir, a proper name for a sort of beast as dealers is so fond of sticking into people, and of

worming into the stables of them as don't know no better?"

"Ah, very true; but tell me, after all, what are you to do," said Horace, "with a brute that gets you off?"

"Git on him again, Sir," said Bob, quietly.

With the co-operation of an ostler, a postillion, two gensdarmes, and a veterinary blacksmith, who offered their assistance, and certainly did afford a great deal of advice, which was given in chorus, a saddle was got on to the back of Lucifer, and whilst Bob held his head, the girths were tightened.

The grey was led safely enough into a field surrounded by a high stone wall, where he pawed up the turf with a shrill neigh of astonishment, as Bob Bridle buckled on his spurs and prepared to get upon his back.

But here, with much vociferation, the veterinary proved that the stirrup leathers were buckled up too short, and the gensdarmes expostulated on the folly of riding him without a curb. In fact, so clamorous and extensive was the counsel

afforded by the bye-standers, that Bob appeared somewhat in the light of a pupil receiving the instructions of many masters.

"Pray, Sir, am *I* to ride him?" inquired Bob.

"Of course," said the Count.

"Then," proceeded Bob, making a profound bow to the veterinary, and politely offering him the stirrup iron, "*Mountey s'il voo plate.*"

Now it must not be imagined from this mispronunciation that Bob had failed to pick up a decent smattering of French; but being a great believer in the inherent tendencies of certain breeds, he had of late taken in his idle hours to literary pursuits, observing that the Bridles had always had an unfortunate propensity to books, the same as the Horseflys to *dog's-nose*—to the proneness of the maternal branch for which liquid he attributed his own unlucky overweight.

Now with some shrewdness Bob had directed his intellectual labours to spelling through a French and English vocabulary; but this branch of his studies had the untoward effect of making him sturdily mispronounce, by his rigid adhe-

rence to the sounds of the English alphabet, every word or sentence he had once seen in print.

In vain the Italian valet told him the true pronunciation.

"If these foreigners will call p l a i t, *play*, more shame for 'em!" he said. "I won't."

But as Bob's object, on the present occasion, was rather to be understood than to persuade by the graces or purity of his rhetoric, his end was obviously answered; for the veterinary replied to his very insinuating invitation to mount by a vehement negative.

"*Voulez-voo*?" said Bob, turning with sarcastic civility to one of his moustachiod advisers; but at this moment Lucifer growing impatient gave a snort and an indignant bound, which almost lifted the groom off his legs, whilst the gendarme started back two paces, with an oath, and a face three inches elongated at the bare suggestion.

"Then," said Bob, "p'raps you will let me go to work in my own fashion. And now, Sir," addressing Horace, "perhaps you'll keep

an eye that they don't get in the way of his heels; for sogers, and pigs, and old women, is always in the way of horses; no wonder the sight on 'em makes 'em restive."

Almost instantaneously as his foot was raised to the stirrup, Lucifer gave a wild, terrific scream, and a bound of prodigious power; but this time he bounded under the weight of Bob Bridle, who was firmly seated on his back.

As the group around him cleared out of his way, there followed a moment of anxious expectation, which was disappointed; for the horse seemed lost in wonderment at the indignity offered him, and remained for a few seconds in the exact position into which he had fallen, uttering a low and almost dog-like whine. But then all his indignation seemed to break forth in one concentrated burst of fury; he reared, he plunged, he screamed, he snorted, and then he broke away, bound after bound, leaping like a stag, with all his four feet from the ground at once.

Then he made a desperate effort to seize the rider with his teeth, and reared so high that he

was on the point of falling backwards, till he was urged on, and again leaped forward bound after bound, bound after bound, and then again he reared, and plunged, and kicked, and screamed, and snorted. And thus the horse and rider struggled, till the only question seemed whether the wild untiring vigor of the animal, or the skill and obstinacy of the man, would triumph.

At length, covered with foam, and tossing the white froth from his mouth, the steed paused for a moment near the spectators, with panting sides and starting eyes, and red distended nostrils.

When Sinbad found the old man of the mountains inextricably fastened on his shoulders, he could not have spoken words of more plaintive expression than did the piteous neigh of the grey horse.

And yet, there sat the little wiry iron-framed groom, as if upon a chair: cool, calm, unruffled, and collected. He disengaged his right hand from the reins one instant, just to smooth down his handkerchief, and tuck in a truant end.

The Count was about to speak, when away burst Lucifer again, with all the fury and the malice he had gathered in the interval of his repose. He reared, and swerved, and plunged, his mane all literally bristling up; and then he tried to lie down with his rider; but this time the blood spurted from his spur, and the horse sprang into the air with a prodigious bound, instead of rolling on the earth; and then, after another pause, he rushed to the extremity of the field, and tried to crush the horseman's thigh against the wall; but again the spur made him swerve.

The idea, however, tickled his equinine fancy, for he came back twice and thrice, to renew the attempt, with furious and malignant resolution. But the fourth time, Bob Bridle holding his head so as to prevent his swerving right or left, tightened his armed heels like an iron vice, and brought him straight up to the five foot wall, at a speed so furious that it seemed inevitable that he must either be dashed to pieces or leap over it, which he did in gallant style, clearing it by many inches; and then

away he galloped up the hill side, from field to field, flying over inclosure wall, after inclosure wall, till from the walled-in fields he was speeding over the heath, and amongst the gigantic masses of granite, and up the steep and rugged slippery rock, on which it seemed that his hoofs could scarcely have held their footing.

And now a new source of anxiety opened to the spectators, for the fate of the noble horse and his daring rider; for at the summit of the hill a deep and dangerous chasm intervened abruptly. The wild and furious steed speeding onwards on the dangerous crags and the yawning precipice before him, formed an appalling picture. But here the danger ceased most unexpectedly; for the horse stopped short; he was clearly alarmed as he looked down on the abyss, and the excitement of his anger vanished with the terror of his situation.

And here the rider triumphed. He patted, and encouraged, and spoke to him, and dismounting and re-mounting alternately, he guided back the trembling beast, through all the difficulties of his timid downward course, over the

dangerous ground he had dashed up so proudly! It was evident that the horse was now driven to rely on the rider, and found encouragement from his judicious handling and his voice. And then leaping him again over the enclosure walls, and galloping him round every field, his course being only now interrupted by an occasional burst of temper when the horse found himself again on terra firma, Bob, after an hour's exertion, brought the grey triumphantly up to his master.

"What do you say to that?" said the Count.

"Ah!" observed the veterinary, "no man could ever ride such an incarnate devil."

"Why, where are your eyes?"

"Oh! that is not riding—that is fastening one'self on to a horse's back like a monkey, or like a tick to the fleece of a sheep; a man must be three parts a monkey to do so."

"And," added a gendarme, "it must utterly spoil his riding, according to all the principles of the art."

Lucifer had next to be curried. It was evident that the groom had obtained, by his first victory, a wonderful ascendancy over his stubborn

temper, but it was not quite subdued; for he offered precisely that degree of resistance to the operation, which rendered it just executable; but that was all, though Bob declared, that

"Barring he was a little fresh, he was as quiet a horse as one could wish to see."

"But he has a very ugly trick," said Horace, "which I never saw in a horse before, of kicking forwards with his hind legs, like a cow."

"Oh, Sir," replied the groom, "horses has their pertikilarities as well as men; my own grandfather on my mother's side, old Samuel Horsefly, and all on 'em before and after him, had a way like of taking snuff with the thumb and little finger of their left hands, by which a gentleman might have knowed 'em anywhere. Now, Sir, by the pertikilarity of that horse's cow-kick, there's a many would have sworn he was a *Swap*. I've seen a dozen of *Swap's* get, or more, and half of 'em was given to it. In my opinion, Sir, it stamps his breed and adds to his value; besides, Lord love you, Sir, them cow-kicks cannot hurt one."

But as Bob was speaking, Lucifer, whose sides

were tickled by the comb, made a violent snatch at the groom, and though he was holding him with the left hand by the head, the energy of the horse's action carried him a little backwards, and with a dexterous malice, by the very kick which Bob had been discussing, as if in practical refutation of his theory, he struck him in the stomach, and stretched him almost senseless.

The veterinary bled him, to which Bob offered no objection, partly on account of the style in which it was done, and partly because he was speechless with pain. He was carried to bed, and Count Horace hastened himself to bring the most famous doctor of the district. After a search of near an hour, he might be said in two senses, to have *found him out*, for he both discovered his domicile and received the intelligence that he was absent from it. Having dispatched a messenger for him, he returned to the patient.

The doctor found him very pale, and evidently in great pain. Mr. Mortimer's valet was by his bed side; there were a couple of tin boxes open beside him, which seemed to be filled, the one

with little oblong bits of tallow-like rushlight-ends, the other with a green salve; and there was a seal skin pocket-book, containing lancets, prickers, and a few veterinary instruments. In his right hand, Bob was holding an old and well-thumbed pocket bible.

"How is he now?" said Horace, eagerly. "The doctor will be here in an hour; but what shall we do in the meantime?"

"Oh! Monsieur le Comte," replied the valet, "Mistare Bridelle will see no doctor—he never has—he never will."

"How do you feel, my poor fellow, now?" said Horace, taking his hand.

"A little rum like, Sir," answered Bob, "but better. It is only a poke in the bread-basket; one of them off-hand hurts that will be all right one way or t'other by this time to-morrow; but," he added, "as it may perwent my arguing the pint, perhaps you will oblige me and keep the foreign doctors out of the way, at least till I either go over the wrong side of the post, or recover."

"God bless me!" exclaimed the Count, "you

must be examined, man. I trust in Heaven there is no serious injury done; but all that art can do, shall be done to speed your recovery."

"I hope not, Sir," said Bob; "I've nothing to say to doctors. 'Cepting some veterinaries, I never see one that knowed even how to physic a dog or a horse, let alone a Christian, and I dislike foreign uns especially. As for heart, Sir, I never see that any of 'em, French or English, had partikerlarly much; and I've took already more than all the doctors in France has got to give me—the half of one of these here English horse-balls, as I always uses, made up at Newmarket and genu-wine, I know. I've put a James' blister on the part, with the help of that ere 'talian walley, (pointing to Mr. Mortimer's valet), and so it is my opinion on the whole, that if I am to live I shall live, and if I am to die, no one can say I've done it a-purpose, and I've got a bit of comfort here as a Papist wouldn't bring me."

Here Bob pointed to his Bible.

At length the doctor came, but nothing could exceed the sullen ill-will of the sick groom to-

wards him. Being a man of sense, whilst he expressed his astonishment at the extraordinary remedies applied, he admitted that for the present he could do nothing; the internal medicine he thought might increase the inflammation, but the mischief was done, and the blister could only act as a counter-irritant, and might neutralise its effects, so he would not remove it. He was of the opinion of the patient, that a few hours would render him much better or much worse, and he took his departure, promising to return within a given time.

"And now, Sir," said Bob, who seemed again in pain, "I hope they haven't give the grey his fill of cold water."

"Oh! curse the horse," exclaimed the Count, "I'll have him shot to-morrow!"

"Shot!" shouted Bob, starting up in his bed in spite of his blister, as if he had been shot himself. "Sixteen hands high, thorough-bred, fast-up to any weight, and sound as a bell, and talk of shooting him!"

"Never," said the Count, "will I again put the life and limbs of a human being in compe-

tition with the gratification of keeping an animal like that, after what he has done to-day."

"Shoot him!" re-echoed Bob, "I never heard of such a sin; why, Sir, unless you change your mind, I should neither live quiet if I am to live, nor go off the course comfortable if I am to die. Consider, Sir, what a many horses them as rides 'em spoils, for one unlucky horse as spoils a rider. Consider, Sir, that this here book instructs us to do good to them as hurts us, even when they are reasoning Christians as knows the hurt they've done us, much less to forgive a poor dumb animal that has been worrited by foreigners and sogers. Why, Sir, it would be a wickedness, if he was a cocktail and a screw."

"Well, well," said Horace, "we will see then; at all events you have the true feeling of a Christian."

"I don't know," said Bob; "we are all apt to neglect this book, till we require the horse-balls; but of late I've thought more often of it; and, Sir, if anything should go amiss, perhaps you'll not forget to give it to our sweet young

lady to forward to my mother. My father give it me five year ago, with this here box of balls. 'Bobby,' says he, 'you are going to foreign parts; but now mind, my lad—never neglect your horses, fear God, and keep your bowels open.' "

The next morning Horace went early with the doctor to visit the invalid. The nurse left to watch him was fast asleep, and the patient's bed was tenantless. He was at length traced to the stable, whither he had crawled, and was rubbing down the grey. A few days after, Bob Bridle, on excellent terms with Lucifer, was leading him along the road to Toulouse.

And this is the history of how he came to enter the service of Count Horace.

CHAPTER V.

"I HAVE ventured to call, Miss Mortimer," said the bluff Sir Thomas, "to hear from your own lips how you feel after the agitation of that terrible evening. I hope you are quite restored to health."

"I thank you," answered Blanche. "I am quite recovered now, and am very grateful. Indeed, this kind visit has given me fresh cause for being so."

"At least, it's kindly meant," thought Sir Thomas Blunt, "however you may consider it;" but he observed aloud:

"The deep interest which I could not fail to take in any woman placed in so painful

a situation, would not have allowed me to act otherwise—to say nothing of finding in her a countrywoman — a countywoman and almost a kinswoman. For although the excitement of the moment may have driven it entirely from your recollection, I remember perfectly that you told me you were the daughter of Edward Mortimer, of —— Hall. I knew all about him, poor fellow! and I knew all his brothers, though I have lost sight of them since they left the county. In fact, the family was somehow distantly connected with my own."

"Oh!" said Blanche, "I remember well your saying so: and I must therefore shake hands with you as an old friend of my uncle's, after thanking you for the disinterested kindness you showed to me as a stranger."

"And what has become of George?"

"He died in India."

"By heavens, it is a pity!" exclaimed Sir Thomas. "Poor George! he was a pretty rider. He would have lived to the age of Methusalem, if sitting a horse had any thing

to do with living. But then, why do men go to India? To gratify the ambition of the country, to run it to eventual expense, to lose their livers, and to jeopardize their souls! And William?"

"Dead!"

"Dead too! and Ralph?"

"Ralph died in my arms," said Blanche. "I am not quite out of mourning for him yet."

"God bless me!" observed the Baronet, after a brief pause; "what ravages death has made. Why it is only eight, or ten, or twelve—no, let me see—it is twenty years ago since we were all together! And have they left large families?"

"Only myself," answered Blanche, with a melancholy smile, as the loneliness of her position, of which she never otherwise thought, was thus recalled to her.

"What, only you!" and then he reflected that it was perhaps just as well, since from his recollection of them, they were not people to have left behind them many broad acres for the use of a numerous posterity. "Per-

haps then, Miss Mortimer, the isolated position in which you are left, perhaps the distant connexion I may claim with you, and, above all, my good intentions, may prove my apology for the delicate subject on which I am about to enter."

Blanche coloured, and nodded slightly for him to proceed, for she had an instinctive suspicion of the nature of his communication.

"Then allow me to premise that I am aware I have undertaken a very disagreeable and thankless office; though it is a duty I should almost have felt called upon to perform towards any countrywoman, though she had been a thorough stranger."

"Pray, Sir, go on," said Blanche.

"I trust, therefore, that you will not view my interference, however abrupt it may appear, and however little warranted by our very short acquaintance—I trust, in a word, Miss Mortimer, that even if I give you pain, you will duly appreciate my motives—"

"Pray, Sir, proceed," said Blanche, whose

anxious embarrassment was increased by the unwillingness of the Baronet to enter at once upon his communication.

"Ah!" thought the Baronet, "that is the rub;" for though he was a bold, he was a kind-hearted man, and he was fully conscious that he was about to wound. But at length he continued:

"When I accidentally became acquainted with you at the Opera House, and had the good fortune to be at hand to render you what little service was in my power, you were not alone, Miss Mortimer. You were escorted by a Mr. Mattheus."

Blanche looked for a moment embarrassed; and then thinking to place their relative connexion beyond all doubt, said with some dignity:

"Yes, Sir; and allow me to thank you in his name for the assistance you so nobly rendered him."

"For that," said Sir Thomas, "no thanks are due to me, either from you or him, since

my conduct was so naturally dictated by my sympathy as an Englishman with the spirit which chastised, on the spot, a bully in the act of insulting a woman. I should have served the intruder so myself, only that, perhaps, I should have kept him in the box to punish him, instead of throwing him out of it. Besides," continued the Baronet, "Mr. Mattheus has been personally profuse of his gratitude."

"You have seen him then since?"

"Daily," replied Sir Thomas.

"Indeed!"

"In fact, I have only just left him. But, excuse me, Miss Mortimer—excuse the liberty I am about to take, and which I only venture upon when I come to consider your youth, your unprotected, lonely condition, your natural inexperience, our half relationship, and the fact that I am a contemporary of your uncle's, and old enough to be your father; but I was about to ask you, do you know who Mr. Mattheus is?"

Know Mattheus! what a question!

thought Blanche. Oh, yes! how long, how well, how intimately she had known him! how his image was bound up with almost every pleasurable sensation through girlhood! how he had been tried in her bitter adversity, and proved disinterested, and generous, and good! but then it was a mightily difficult question to answer satisfactorily to a stranger.

"May I," at length said Blanche, "without doubting the friendliness of your purpose, first inquire the motive of your curiosity regarding him?"

"Assuredly," replied the Baronet. "It has arisen from hearing that you are betrothed to him. Believe me, that I should not thus rudely have intruded upon you without previously making all due inquiries; indeed, I have it from his own lips. Are you really going to marry him?"

"Sir!" said Blanche, colouring, "I am my own mistress."

"Yes; more is the pity!" muttered Sir Thomas, half audibly.

"And, after all," she continued, as her blue

eyes flashed, and the flush which had overspread her neck and countenance came out into a deep open blush, like a suddenly expanding rose, "after all, why should I hesitate to admit to you, what I shall soon be proud to acknowledge before the whole world? Yes, Sir! I am about to become his wife!"

"By heavens!" said Sir Thomas; "that is spoken fairly and frankly out, like George Mortimer's daughter; and now, my noble girl, listen to Tom Blunt, who will be quite as open with you. I, who know foreigners intimately, am not astonished at your predilection for this Mr. Mattheus: he is a good-looking fellow, well-bred, possessed of much more information, and many more accomplishments, than most gentlemen boast, and I have never met with a more prepossessing foreigner—for of course I need not tell you that he is neither an Englishman nor an American."

Blanche nodded assent.

"But now—believe, that I am actuated only by the most heartfelt interest when I ask you

emphatically and seriously if you know well who and what he is?"

"Well! Sir Thomas!" answered Blanche. "I take your solicitude for me kindly, as I am sure you mean it; but, on the other hand, you must excuse, because it would be painful, my wholly answering your question; but will it not suffice to reassure you, when I tell you that Mr. Mattheus was an old friend of my uncle Ralph's; that I have known him since my girlhood; that he is positively the oldest acquaintance I remember; and that I have had occasion to prove in a singular manner his disinterestedness and attachment."

"Not quite," replied the Baronet, "if that were to cause the last surviving relative of a good old friend and neighbour to throw herself away upon a——but let me first tell you what I know; only, allow me, Miss Mortimer, five minutes of your patience; thus far I must almost venture to insist that you should hear me, and then I drop the subject at once and for ever, if you require it."

"Proceed," said Blanche, endeavouring to master her emotion.

"Then excuse my first relating to you an anecdote illustrative of my meaning. I knew a young lady, accomplished, wealthy, beautiful, and highly born as yourself. She was on the point of marrying a foreigner, of whom I knew previously nothing, either of good or evil. Perhaps all that she had seen in him was calculated justly to prepossess her in his favour. Well, I happened to be present on the occcasion of his grossly, though perhaps unavoidably, insulting a man at least his equal in rank; it was one of those marked and terrible insults which, in the foolish code of male honour, can only be washed out in blood. I am no duellist, Miss Mortimer. I do not see the beauty of a law by which the injured should be forced to expose himself to still further injury. But still, like many another foolish law, the law of honour is acknowledged, and the man who sets either at defiance is to be dreaded in the one case and despised in the other. Now imagine my hearing that the betrothed was about to be challenged by the man he had chastised; and knowing that he was friendless in the place where it

occurred, offering myself as his friend. I knew that it was perhaps hopeless to prevent a hostile meeting, but I thought that I might probably divest it of the sanguinary character which foreign duels are apt to assume.

"I found the challenge, couched as it was in terms the most outrageous which a gentleman could be brought to repeat, and backed by threats of personal violence, accepted with reluctance. No apology, said the second, would his principal admit, unless the challenged passed under his uplifted horsewhip. Now you, Miss Mortimer, are a gentlewoman; and I am a bluff and peaceable elderly gentleman; but could you have wished a fond brother, or could I have wished an only son, to submit to the infamy of such a degradation? No! I see you would not.

"Now imagine that on the morning fixed for the encounter I found the intended bridegroom in a terrible state of agitation:—that I pardon:—if a man is afraid of quitting life, he cannot help it, poor devil, though it's bad taste to show it. But imagine a strong and full-grown man

weeping like a woman, and falling on his knees, and swearing, that a fate the most terrible and mysterious hangs over him, and renders it impossible for him to keep his appointment! It was in vain I scouted the idea of having palmed on me the excuses of 'mysterious destinies' and 'terrible secrets'—as if I was a novel-reading, love-sick, and romantic girl. In vain I showed him that nothing more awful could in his situation possibly hang over him than the infamy and exposure he would bring upon himself, and the stain that even having ever listened to his proposals of alliance would bring upon the indignant gentlewoman to whom he was betrothed.

"But it was in vain; I left him rolling in an agony of terror or despair upon the hearth rug. The appointed hour of meeting was passing then, and it passed without his finding courage.

"But stop—as I was hurrying from him in disgust, I opened a wrong door, and passed through an inner room, where I beheld an individual whom I at once recognised, seated luxu-

riantly, smoking, on his ottoman, and evidently quite at home.

"This man, whom I had not spoken to for years, I instantly knew again, because twenty years ago I had picked him up on the continent, shirtless, shoeless and starving, and taken him into my service.

"I believe his history to have been that he was servant to an officer, whom he robbed after the battle of Leipsic; at all events he robbed me. He had even, I believe, been branded in the galleys; but of that I took little heed, for I knew how many of those who sit in judgment have merited little better. At length, he became marker to a billiard table. He then persuaded some good easy people, that he was the natural son of a Swedish nobleman, parading his ignoble scars, as honourable wounds. In fact throughout, wherever I have since chanced to hear of him, his career has been infamous. Now, let me ask you, after what had passed betwixt me and the betrothed, when I had seen him the craven, to find him the intimate companion of the thieving discarded valet, the croupier and the

swindler, was I not in duty bound, as an honest-hearted man, to let the intended bride know all I knew ?"

" Unquestionably," said Blanche, " but—"

Sir Thomas made an impatient gesture with his hand, and then proceeded :

" Now, Miss Mortimer, though bluff and rough, even I, such as you see me, and antidote-like as I must look now to the passion—even I loved once, and I am not even yet divested of sympathy, in my rude way, for what men of my stamp are apt to laugh to scorn. But I know too that love, blind love as they call it, is indeed like an old hunter, following the music of the hounds ; and matrimony is at best but like a blind hedge ; we may land well and go on pleasantly, or we may come into a gravel-pit—it is neck or nothing. Therefore, and because my tough old heart has tender points, I brought myself to break this painful intelligence to the young lady, offering to prove to her my assertions—and what do you think she did ?"

" Poor thing !" said Blanche, with a sigh,

"what could she do? she found her love had been a dream, and she discarded him;" and then she continued with a smile of sweet assurance: "But what suspicious parallel could you possibly draw between the conduct of so miserable a creature, and that of Mr. Mattheus? or what prudent moral could be reasonably deduced from things so utterly dissimilar?"

"Hark!" said the Baronet. "I have been named second to Mr. Mattheus."

"Good God!" exclaimed Blanche, starting up, "he has challenged the Russian Prince—I know he has—what is to be done to prevent it? Oh, tell me—tell me—tell me! that terrible man will kill him!"

"Oh no," said Sir Thomas. "It is the Russian Prince who has challenged Mattheus! and as I left Mattheus rolling on the rug when the hour struck that we should have been at the Bois de Boulogne, the Prince will not kill him, he will only post him up, and horsewhip him when he meets him."

"Oh! merciful Providence!" exclaimed Blanche, covering her eyes with her hands.

At this moment the door of the adjacent room opened, and Mattheus, in a Spanish travelling cloak, entered and stood before them.

He was evidently equipped for a journey. His countenance was flushed, his manner was full of exaltation. He placed his hat behind one of the *fauteuils*, and then, having unfastened his cloak and laid it carefully on an ottoman, advanced a few paces.

Now one moment previously, the sober, anxious earnestness of the revelation made to Blanche by Sir Thomas Blunt, whose open, honest frankness was stamped in unmistakeable lines upon his features, and characterised in the very tone of his voice and the manner of his speech, had carried to her a sudden sickening, benumbing dread, almost amounting to a vague conviction of a truth which was so fearful to her. But the sight of Mattheus instantly dispelled it, and her first impulse, even in face of the severe and contemptuous aspect with which he was greeted by the Baronet, was a feeling of regret and shame at having for an instant doubted her betrothed.

"Oh, Mattheus!" she exclaimed, rushing to meet him. "In Heaven's name explain this cruel misunderstanding — this is Sir Thomas Blunt, an old friend of my family."

"I know him," replied Mattheus, with assumed coolness; "I have overheard his last words, and I can guess the remainder."

"Oh no," said Blanche, "I am sure you cannot guess them; but you shall hear, that you may shew him how false have been his conclusions, how mistaken and unfounded his words."

"No," said Mattheus, calmly and confidently, "his words are literally true. I have refused to fight that duel. I am in the power of a man whom I detest and abhor, I am dishonoured in the eyes of the world, I am unworthy to be the husband of Blanche Mortimer."

"Oh! merciful Providence!" ejaculated Blanche, whilst the bold, open features of the Baronet relapsed from their contemptuous sternness into a sort of loathing pity.

"But," continued Mattheus, "this man of the world, in the ignorance of his fancied wis-

dom, is wrong—utterly wrong, and a thousand times wrong in the conclusions to which he has hastened so uncharitably, dear Blanche ! I swear it to you by all the happiness I am about to forfeit. Through my whole past life, up to this hour, my conscience only reproaches me with loving you; and that, if it be sin or crime, is one for which there can be no pardon ; for it is one of which there will never be cessation or repentance !"

"Now hark you, fellow !" interrupted Sir Thomas, in a voice which, like the sudden bellow of a bull, made the very panes of glass vibrate, and which caused Blanche hastily to lay her hand upon his arm.

"One moment," replied Mattheus, in an accent so imploringly earnest, and in a tone so unmoved by the Baronet's anger, as to command attention. "One moment's patience :—this day, Blanche, we probably part for ever—perhaps indeed within one minute we may be for ever and irremissibly separated. But if I can bear the terrible fate of quitting you, I cannot bear to leave you with the curl of contempt upon that

beautiful lip, which has smiled on me so lovingly. When this man says—what all the world is saying, perhaps now—that I am a craven—it is false! false! false! as I will give you instant and unquestionable proof."

Then approaching the table he wrote a single line, in a bold, unwavering hand, and having sanded it, he rose and handed the sheet of paper to the Baronet, and then proceeded hurriedly:

"You see that arm-chair on which I have placed my hat, and you see at the opposite end of the room my cloak, thrown on the ottoman. Now, dear Blanche, lift up either the hat or the cloak, and you will come to the instant conviction that Sir Thomas there lies, when he insinuates that I fear to die."

Sir Thomas opened very wide his eyes when he read upon the paper given him, "Whichever Blanche chooses, I use the other;" and the thought flashed across him that the man was mad or delirious, or affecting madness; but Blanche stepped hastily up to the arm-chair, according to the directions she had received, and looked into the hat.

"Good Heavens!" she exclaimed, "what is this, Mattheus, a pistol?"

But as she turned round Mattheus had taken the fellow-pistol from under the cloak upon the divan, cocked it, and pointed the barrel to his forehead.

"Blanche!" he exclaimed, "lost life is nothing; but remember, not to lose your love I am forfeiting my soul—for this is suicide."

Sir Thomas rushed forward; but his foot caught in the rug—he fell, and Mattheus pulled the trigger!

There followed the smart crack of a copper cap, and then throwing down the pistol, Mattheus, whose hand had not wavered, whose brow had seemed rather elated than depressed when he wrote the sentence and when he drew the trigger, sank on a chair, and crossing himself, turned deadly pale for a moment; but he rose again before the Baronet could get on his legs, and seizing the other pistol, he hastily cocked and fired it against the wall. This time, the charge of a loaded barrel ignited and thundered through the house, the room being filled

with sulphurous smoke, and the looking-glass smashed to shivers by the ball, whilst Blanche shrieked, and Mattheus, at the same moment, was deprived of his now innocuous weapon, and knocked down into a chair behind him by the powerful arm of Sir Thomas, who pinned him in it with the gripe of a giant—a useless restraint, for he made no resistance.

"Why," said Sir Thomas, "the man is a raving maniac!"

"Not so," said Mattheus, very quietly; "but now that Providence has visibly protected me, and has staid my arm from committing so great a crime as self-murder, do you think that I, who have just taken my chance between two pistols, the one loaded and the other not, do you believe that I had any personal fear of meeting the aggressor?"

"Why, zounds!" said the Baronet, "courage as ill applied, is, for aught I know, worse than poltroonery: it results in running the risk of one's skin, and incurring the infamy into the bargain."

But Blanche, who at first had not understood

this singular scene, when she learned what her lover had done, in the agitation of her terror at a danger which was past, allowed her tenderness to get the better of her reserve, and threw her arms round his neck.

"Oh!" said Sir Thomas, half gloomily, and half sarcastically, "I have nothing further to do here," and he seized his hat. "Can I see you, Sir, alone?"

"Assuredly."

"When?"

"In an hour—or two hours."

"Say two hours. Where?"

"In my own apartment," said Mattheus.

"Be it so."

But Blanche, recalled to herself by the first words of the Baronet, followed him to the door, and taking his unwilling hand, she said eagerly:

"My kind friend, I thank you for your courageous frankness; but he, to whom in the eyes of Heaven I am already promised, he is not you see the craven you thought him. I knew him too truly; and too well! And so

believe me you will find him, notwithstanding appearances, worthy in everything of esteem, and only to be pitied, not blamed, for the imperative mystery which binds his tongue, and circumscribes his very actions."

"I'll tell you what, my poor girl," said Sir Thomas, "I am afraid you will find at the bottom of this imperative mystery, an escape from the straight-jacket, and the mad-house. But whether he be a mad-man, or an adventurer, or a fool, I will find out more about him before I am many hours older. So God bless you; for willy nilly, I must keep an eye upon you, and protect you."

"And now, dear Blanche!" said Mattheus, "let me bless you for the noble confidence you have shewn in me; let me bless you once more before I leave you."

"Leave me!" exclaimed Blanche.

"Leave you. Why what remains to me but to leave you, Blanche? Am I not at this hour dishonoured in the eyes of the world? and will not the ruffian, with whom I should never have interfered in any quarrel of my own,

take care and trumpet forth my shame to the whole city. Oh no, Blanche! I go with the consolation of knowing that I am not what men will judge me, and, at the same time, that you are not involved in their reprobation of what they think I am."

"What, dear Mattheus!" said Blanche, enthusiastically, "what! because the world, so cruel to the unfortunate, persecutes you with its contempt, shall I, knowing the unjust persecution you suffer, knowing the wickedness and falsity of its calumny, shall I, instead of being a stay and consolation to you, place the world's opinion in competition with the pleasing duty of the heart's devotion?"

But here the servants, and several of the tenants of the hotel, were knocking at the door of the ante-room for admission, alarmed by the report of fire-arms. Mattheus easily quieted their fears, by assuring them that it was occasioned by the accidental discharge of a pistol; but, profiting by the opportunity, he did not return to Blanche, who thus, after the agitating scene, was left alone, in anxiety and suspense.

Now, at a very early hour on the same morning, Prince Ivan Ivanovitch awakened Hippolyte, who slept under his roof, as he was to be his second in the expected encounter with Mattheus. They had breakfasted, or, at least, the second had heartily broken his morning fast.

On an adjacent sofa were several pairs of pistols; there were the slender, inlaid barrels of the old Christoph Kuchenreuter, and the bell-hammered pistols of the unapproachable Joe Manton, and the flashy-looking, ebony-stocked, silver-mounted Le Page's, beside a plain pair by old Wogdon, and another by the modern Kuchenreuters of Ravensburg.

Now the Prince Ivan took up one after the other, and looked with the eye of an amateur along the barrel, as he aimed at the top of a Perigord pie on the breakfast table.

"My dear fellow," said Hippolyte, "the pistols will do, and your skill will do; if you can only use it with one fourth of your usual coolness, you may shave off the tip of his nose."

"Oh, it does not quite depend even upon one's own coolness; for instance, suppose I were

to attempt it, if his want of nerve make him swerve half-an-inch, he runs even chances of escaping altogether, and therefore I shall not try it; but I will bet to hit him first shot in the heart or brain, and I leave to your option which."

At this moment, Baron Bamberg was announced.

"Oh, you can see no one, of course," said the second.

"Pardon me; we have an hour and a half yet," and Prince Ivanovitch stepped into another room to receive Baron Bamberg.

The reader has been already personally introduced to Baron Bamberg, as the man with the green shade in the scene at the Opera, and he has learned from the lips of Sir Thomas Blunt something of his history; for he was the individual whom he was so much surprised to see in one of the apartments of Mattheus. This personage had been now, and for some years past, employed by the secret police of St. Petersburg, and he had eminently distinguished him-

self in this capacity. He obtained his first employment in that department by turning to very good account a box of papers which he had taken from one of the fugitive conspirators of 1825. These papers, a portion of which he gave up at once to the secret office, sufficed to insure the punishment of half-a-score of individuals, and to place him high in its good graces; the remainder enabled him to hold the rod over about as many more, whom he now and then denounced, when his services had not been sufficiently successful or brilliant to keep up his credit; and with several of whom he used the possession of this secret as he did many others of which his profession rendered him master.

It thus happened that Mattheus, having been long abroad, had been for several years watched by him; and the indefatigable *employé* had noted down the liberal opinions, which had come to his ear, as expressed by Mattheus; and, in short, he held strangely enough both him and the

Prince in his power, the former in a manner which it would be anticipating the development of the present story to explain; the latter, by the fact of holding several of his letters found in the box above alluded to.

Now Baron Bamberg, as he called himself, having got scent of the intended duel, determined to play the peace-maker, as he had done before; and that very morning he had menaced Mattheus with all the terrors of his authority if he repaired to the place of meeting. But then in his turn, startled at the sight of Sir Thomas, whom he had some cause to remember, and fearful that his influence might finally prevail, he drove straight to the dwelling of the other combatant, and was ushered in to the Prince.

After a long discussion on the subject, he resolutely left the Prince no choice between denunciation and remaining away from the place of meeting. In vain the Prince made him offers the most brilliant; he was a ruined spendthrift for the present, and the Baron saw no practical means of binding him by any future promises.

"But have you reflected how I am driven into a corner," said the Prince, whose face turned to a livid lead colour on finding his vengeance so provokingly baffled. "I am equally lost if I do not now go out."

"Not quite," said the Baron, "I will show you how to manage it; let us send for my little doctor."

Fifteen minutes after, Hippolyte, who was getting rather impatient, was shown into the Prince's bed-room, and told that he had just met with an accident; he had tripped and fallen down stairs as he was showing out his valued friend the Baron. And there his valued friend the Baron stood, and having caused the Prince to be copiously bled, he was then suggesting the application of fresh leeches, and the doctor seemed to defer to all his suggestions, notwithstanding the extreme disinclination of the patient.

However carried out, the pacific intentions of the Baron were in themselves highly laudable, even though he was solely interested in the safety of Mattheus; a sympathy which, as

Mattheus was throughout the really aggrieved party, was the more creditable, and with which of course the draught for thirty thousand roubles, which the Baron held of his, and which, in the event of his death, might be called in question, had nothing to do.

But to the infinite mortification of the Prince, Hippolyte's suspicions were evidently awakened; and being as thoroughly disgusted as Sir Thomas, like him he had abandoned his principal; and thus both principals, whilst neither had been to the ground, were maddened by the imaginary triumph of their rivals.

As for Sir Thomas Blunt, when, at the expiration of two hours, he repaired to the lodgings of Mattheus, he was referred to the hotel in which Blanche had taken up her abode. Meanwhile he fancied that he had chalked out a course which he was determined energetically to pursue, and which must have the effect of preventing an imprudent girl from throwing herself recklessly away; at least, until Mattheus was exposed, or until his character was cleared up. And there is no reason to doubt but that his

plan would have succeeded, only that when he reached Miss Mortimer's, he found her maids in the midst of packing, and he was informed that Miss Mortimer had driven away to quit Paris twenty minutes ago.

"Quit Paris! and where is she going?"

"To Scotland, Sir!"

"To Scotland! Alone?"

"Oh no, Sir, with Mr. Mattheus!"

"Then," muttered the Baronet, "she must go to the devil her own way, as all women will."

CHAPTER VI.

Brought up in his extreme youth by an English grandmother, Count Horace had learned to speak that language with fluency; but naturally given to prejudice, he had been distinguished, on attaining man's estate, by his singular antipathy to everything English. He had been partly imbued in the Faubourg St. Germain with the leaven of old monarchical hostility to that Protestant England, after whose example every noble had dreaded to see his feudal rights abolished, and against whose sturdy parliaments every courtier of absolutism had taken his cue to rail—a feeling mixed with hereditary rivality, and with the memory of Crecy and Agincourt,

and Blenheim, Malplaquet, and Oudenarde, and the loss of India and Canada, set off, but never balanced by such fields as Fontenoi. He had been brought up to hear the incessant malignity of a portion of the restored nobility who could not forgive being brought back by British triumphs to the position they had abandoned without a blow, and who turning against their benefactors were only too anxious to pander to the honest hatred of the rest of the nation.

In addition to this, some of his family having served the empire, Count Horace had much connexion with a party accustomed to view everything English, through the distorting medium of most deadly enmity. Chance threw him across a good-natured Englishman, who had the means of removing many of his prejudices, and took the trouble to do so.

After an angry discussion on this subject, during which Count Horace flattered himself that he had spoken with "frankness," his antagonist called upon him and reminded him of his offensive expressions. Horace fired up, and offered ready satisfaction for his words.

"Oh! no, my dear fellow," said his visitor with a smile, "it would neither be satisfactory to me to be sent out of this world, leaving you unconvinced, nor to send you out of it unpersuaded. The satisfaction I have come to demand, and which, in fact, I insist on, is the following: you are going to England to purchase horses; now I require that you should go and stay with my brother—a deuced good fellow, although he is an elder brother. He will both advise you in your purchases of horse-flesh; and, I think, show you England in rather brighter colours than you saw it during ten days in Leicester Square in a November fog."

"Shake hands upon it," replied the Count. "I accept your offer as frankly as it is made, on condition that your brother will let no one else show him Paris."

"Then just listen to my letter, and correct me if I have not noted down with sufficient accuracy your opinions, as you last night expressed them.

"Dear Brother,

"The bearer of this, &c. &c. &c. Now, my

dear Tom, he is withal a fine young fellow; but I wish you to remove some queer notions he has imbibed concerning us. If you can't, who know life so well both abroad and at home, nobody can; but I have a shrewd suspicion that you will. In the first place, I must tell you that our friend, Horace, calls us a nation of shopkeepers—worshippers of the golden calf; our nobility, modern parvenus; our people, coarse and brutalized in its lower orders, and abject sycophants to royalty among the higher; our country a dull and sunless waste, or a foggy marsh where neither flower will bloom nor fruit ripen, protected only by its ditch, but doomed to be the prey of the first who can stride across it; our inns are mere pot-houses, even in London; our sports are ridiculous; our shooting, the massacre of hares and pheasants, tame and counted as sheep and barn-door fowls; our hunting, without skill or science, is the mad pursuit of a fox or a caged deer, with hounds that have scarcely any nose; our very riding is like that of monkeys. Our army, no army, but the most fortunate of blunderers; our

nobility the sons and grandsons of pettifoggers and cheesemongers, only exceeded in the ridicule of their arrogance towards the nobles of France, Germany, and Belgium, by the assumption of equality of beardless ensigns, with epaulettes, purchased like the lace of our lacqueys' hatbands. Contrast, he says, with this mushroom nobility the illustrious houses of the continent; contrast the chivalry of the French private or artisan, defending his honour at his sword's point, or his grotesque gallantry towards the fair sex, with the boxing, cockfighting, lower orders of England; contrast the fulsome expressions of loyalty, the kneeling and kissing of hands, with the sullen, but manly independence of modern France; compare its champaign plains, its vineyards, and its vast forests to our own territory; compare the Sablonière or the London Vereys with the hotels in the Rue de Rivoli, or with Vefours and Vereys and Frères Provençaux; contrast our tame shooting to the active exercise of wild shooting in France—our hunting to its scientific venery—when the wolf, the stag, and the boar, are followed by hounds with the scent of the blood-

hound and discovered by hunters, who require the sagacity of the wild Indian to mark their track on the snowless ground, and tell the age, and weight, and sex, of every beast by its foot-prints.

"Contrast, he says, our riding—the bended leg—the constant use of both hands—the rising in the saddle—with the erect and graceful posture of the French manège, where the fingers of the bridle hand alone seemed to play, and the horse to move by the volition of the rider."

"I think, Monsieur le Comte, that you spoke pretty nearly to this effect?"

"Well, perhaps I spoke too freely; but those were certainly my words last night, and are my sentiments now; but their frankness will hardly tell very advantageously in a letter of recommendation."

"Oh, nonsense! the truth is the truth; at all events it will be my brother's business to show you English urbanity and hospitality, as well as everything else, in its brightest colours."

* * * *

Count Horace was accosted as he landed by Sir Thomas, who would take no denial; but, at

the same time, apologised for not receiving his guest at his mansion, which was undergoing thorough repair. They drove to his lodgings. They were ushered up carpeted stairs into a room gorgeously furnished; he was conducted to his bed-room, and shortly after summoned to dinner. The dinner was served off gorgeous vermeil plate; it consisted of a succession of dishes worthy of the best French artistes, amongst which, here and there, some substantial article of English fare was allowed to intrude, as if to show, in its unadorned simplicity, the exquisite quality of the material; for the first time he observed nature, as it were, contending with art for gastronomic laurels. There was every kind of wine, according to every taste, and in every stage of perfection. There were gigantic and highly flavoured fruits grown in this fruitless land, which seemed gathered from the gardens of Aladdin, to say nothing of the pine-apples, and the muscat grapes, of which every one was the size of a French plum; there were grown in the open air apricots as large as French peaches, and peaches, and nectarines, and plums

and figs, such as he had thought never to have ripened but in the imagination of painters. Gloved waiters, silk-stockinged, and in clerical black, judged intuitively the wants, and attended rapidly and noiselessly to the necessities of the guests. They appeared to have concentrated all the intelligence of sharp men in their service, watching even a look, whilst their countenances indicated utter vacuity as to the conversation of those they were serving.

Count Horace retired to bed. His own valet was still sick; he was better valeted. He found his bath, he found all the apparatus of his toilet without unpacking his own, and he sank to sleep upon a bed too soft. The next morning his host apologised for receiving him at an hotel; but his servants, his horses, his carriages, were all in the country.

"An hotel!" said the Count. "Am I in an hotel? I thought the Sablonière the best in London."

"I don't know," said Sir Thomas, "I was never there."

"Well, I should not have believed such com-

fort and magnificence; but, after all, barring the comfort, it is only the combination under one roof of what may be found under several in Paris."

It was the beginning of August.

"I know you are a sportsman," said the host, "so to-morrow, if you have no objection, I will chaperone you to the moors: I hear that birds are plentiful."

They rolled along in a post-carriage drawn by horses which he could scarce believe to be hired ones, over the ceaseless hill and dale of merry England, with its dense hedges, its luxuriant foliage, its rich fields, its magnificent parks, and country-seats, and trim cottages. Count Horace was enchanted; but he ended by judging it too tame, and too much like a garden.

"Now you, like most Frenchmen, are a military man," said Sir Thomas; "how do you think a foreign army could manœuvre amongst the two hundred miles of country, with its hedges and ditches, which you have seen as we have come along?"

"Why, their artillery and cavalry could not

act at all. It is worse than La Vendée. It would be impracticable if you had any force to defend it, which you have not. It is beautiful, but very tame."

"They rattled on till night, and awoke next morning amidst the moors of Westmoreland.

"My dear fellow," said Sir Thomas, "what is the use of your carrying that tasty work-bag, and all those rattletraps. You should be equipped as light as possible for the moors."

"This is my game bag," replied the Count.

"Oh, we use a pony, or half-a-dozen lads to carry that, unless you have the strength of a pack-horse. I expect to kill forty brace to my own gun."

"It must be a barn-door massacre, then," said the Count.

"Not quite. I warn you, it wants good legs and an enduring shoulder."

They were now upon a wild heath, without the trace of any human habitation for miles and miles. A leash of thorough-bred pointers were breasting gallantly through the "ling."

"Look at your dogs," quoth the Count; "they are galloping away like devils; they are very beautiful—but just as we find them—good for nothing."

"The dogs are quartering all right," replied Sir Thomas; "but now I remember, you use heavy animals in France, with stumpy tails, which are never allowed to beat a stone's throw from you." As he spoke, one pointed, and the others backed.

"What a pity," said the Count; "they will never stand till we get up to them."

"Never fear." The sportsmen came up—the dogs were steady—the birds rose—they were fired at, and then the pointers lay down with their noses in the heather, till the guns were reloaded.

"It is wonderful training," said the Count, "but useless."

When they had advanced ten paces, the dogs stood again,—and whir, whir, whir, rose and fell three more grouse.

"You see," said Sir Thomas, "if the dogs had been allowed to run in, to pick up the dead

birds before we had loaded, we should have lost this leash."

"Well, this is wonderful, your devils of dogs are unparalleled; they have beaten in half an hour more than our's would in a day. But who can follow them?"

"If I kill forty brace, I shall tire out two sets!"

At three o'clock they sat down to lunch. Count Horace had found that he could not do the same execution with the small bored Le Page as with a Purday;—"And yet," he said, "on trial, we find the small bores carry the shot more sharply and closer than the large."

"That is because you do not put English charges in them."

But the full charge of an English fowling-piece, after forty or fifty shots, so jarred the Count's shoulder, and set his head so aching—the rapid tramping through wet moss and wiry heather was so fatiguing—that Sir Thomas left him dead beat, and fast asleep.

In three or four hours he awoke, just as the

sun was setting. At some distance he descried Sir Thomas, with his keeper, toiling up to him.

"The three-and-fortieth brace!" shouted the triumphant Baronet; "though the birds are so wild. Now as I suppose you are tired as well as myself, I have ordered beds and dinner at a little public-house, which is only four miles west of us; it would be seven miles home, and our ground to-morrow lies on t'other side."

"Ah!" quoth the Count, as they walked onwards, "shall we ever get to our place of rest?"

"There it is," said the Baronet.

"What! that little hovel in the midst of this wilderness?"

"I thought you found our scenery too tame?"

"Why we are in a desert; but we shall be eaten up with vermin, and scarcely find black bread in such a hovel."

"Never fear," answered stout Sir Thomas.

The Chequers, "licensed to deal in wines, spirits, beer, pepper, and tobacco," was a little road-side alehouse, chiefly frequented by the miners; but there was a snug parlour, a blazing turf fire, walls ornamented with stuffed birds,

and a smiling hostess. There was port and sherry, and bottled ale and stout, and cognac, and excellent tea—indigenous to the Chequers, besides the Baronet's claret and champagne. In addition to their own game, there was a joint of meat, as delicate and as gigantic as those the Count had considered such a phenomenon at the —— Hotel, with fowls as large as Campine capons.

They retired to rest in snow-white sheets—in curtained beds—in rooms comfortably carpeted—the Count found even slippers and Windsor soap supplied, as a matter of course, by the hostess. After a second and third summons he was awakened by Sir Thomas in person.

"Breakfast is waiting, and so are the birds."

"Why, God bless me, you are not going out this morning?"

"Of course; strike whilst the iron is hot; the birds will be wild enough in a week."

"Then, I cry mercy; I am out of walking—I am knocked up."

"So then you don't consider it a barn-door massacre?

"Oh, I beg your pardon; I had no conception of it."

"Well, it always struck me," said the Baronet, "that to cut a figure in grouse shooting—and all shooting is tame sport at best—it required better dogs, and better legs, and a stouter shoulder, and more lasting skill, and altogether a better man, than any continental shooting I know of."

"You are right," sighed the convicted Count.

"And, by the way, have you suffered from the vermin, and the black bread in this hovel?"

"God bless you, no;—it is a little oasis in the desert—a marvel in such a remote part."

"No," replied Sir Thomas, "only an alehouse like every other, from the Land's End to John of Groats' house. Our comforts and our wealth are not all centralised in the capital, or the large cities, or along the main roads—they do sneak somehow into byeways."

A few weeks after, they repaired to the park of Lord Tinsel, to witness a meeting of the ——shire Yeomanry, of which he was colonel.

"You see," observed Sir Thomas, "that

they go through their evolutions in one rank, to prevent confusion worse confounded. I can't say that they manœuvre very brilliantly."

"No," smiled the Count; "although their shakos and scabbards seem their most formidable enemies at present. I see they are a very indifferent sort of national guard on horseback."

"Only," replied the Baronet, "resembling your national guards in number; for there are regiments of them in every county."

"Well, I dare say it is a pleasant pastime; but what an illusion for these people to fancy that they are or ever could be made cavalry! But perhaps it is just as well, for what would be the use of them in such a hedge and ditch-divided country?"

"My dear Count," said the Baronet,—"look! do you see those two young yeomen, rolling about in their saddles, and so mightily puzzled, as you say, by their scabbards and shakos—see how they will take that rattling fence.—Look! they are going across country, to strike into the high road,—topping all the gates."

"Ah! bravo," said the Count.

"You see, they *can* ride. Now be pleased to consider that this very regiment of yeomanry consists chiefly of men accustomed to the dangers of the chase, and mounted as no other cavalry in the world can be mounted You don't see them to advantage to-day,—it is not the first day of meeting, and their Colonel has so strongly expressed himself, that he would rather see them on plough-horses, taken out of a straw-yard, that would keep the ranks, than on the restless and unmanaged hunters and bits of blood which they first brought out of their stables, that many have taken the hint. But you see the men are the best riders, and the most daring men in the country, their horses the best in the world. Now, I ask you candidly, whether it would take long to make good cavalry out of such materials? As to its use in the inclosures of English fields, why, you are right enough in supposing that no regular cavalry could tell; but remember that this very yeomanry alone, of any body of horse in the world, could go across country, because accustomed individually to traverse it like birds. You were struck

with astonishment at the gigantic horses and men of our life guards. I believe that they are the best heavy cavalry in the world; but I should like to see what figure they would cut if charged, after making their way through two or three fences, by this very yeomanry, awkward and in the state of raw material as it is.

" To-morrow you will see a specimen of our militia:—its discipline in war time has always been brought up to that of the line. It may appear paradoxical, but this trim park and garden-looking country of England presents, in a military point of view, greater difficulties of ground than any similar extent of territory in Europe; and these yeomen, without being conscious of the fact, constitute, to defend it, the most formidable indigenous guerrilla of horsemen in the world."

" But in your civil wars?" said the Count.

" In our civil wars—at least, in the only one which interested all classes—in the time of the Commonwealth, it *was* defended, village by village. But the yeomanry, the militia, the breed of horses, the avocations of the men, and the present

disposition of the country's surface, have all been created since then. You see, that so far from its being a mere question of stepping across the herring pond to take possession, there is no tract of country better defended by its nature, and the aptitude of its inhabitants."

"And yet, abroad it is a common prejudice with the best informed. But how is it that your own officers are never heard to allude to these natural advantages?"

"Nine out of ten of them never give the matter a thought; the tenth, with the caution of military pedantry, trusts to the experience of others,—or if he does a little to his own, it has been acquired, like theirs, abroad. All his ideas of the natural difficulties an army may have to contend with, are associated with mountains and defiles, jungles and deserts, marshes and rivers, and fevers; he has never met out of England with any resembling the peculiar obstacles it would offer, and he has never reflected how embarrassed he would be to act at the head of a force invading it."

Before they dismounted to dine with Lord

Tinsel, who entertained at his table that day the whole regiment of yeomanry, Count Horace had agreed to canter on with Sir Thomas to Morton Lodge to leave a message respecting some county business with its occupant, a relative of his own.

The lodge was situated in a small, but well timbered park. It was an old, dusky, and ungainly building; its walls of split flints stuccoed with oyster-shells, and partly over-run with ivy.

Mr. Morton was indisposed in bed, but the Baronet was requested to step up to him. The Count was shewn into a little oak-wainscoted parlour, where a cheerful fire was blazing. His notice was attracted by a genealogical tree suspended above the chimney-piece, much darkened by the smoke, and apparently long appreciated by the flies. Being curious in these matters, he retraced on it with some interest the ancestry of the Mortons, for eight centuries back, to a baron figuring in the Doomsday-book of the northman conqueror. A Morton, he perceived, had stood a siege against a detachment of Prince Rupert's army in that very building.

Count Horace was seated in Lord Tinsel's hall with his Lordship, the officers of the regiment, and the notabilities of the county, at a semi-circular table, prolonged at each extremity into two interminable boards, at each of which a couple of hundred yeomen were accommodated. Toasts were uproariously passing, and speeches uttered so anxious to gain vent that they seemed treading on each others heels; there was always some compliment to Lord Tinsel contained in them, and a great many common places about devotion to Church and Throne.

"So a large portion of the guests are Lord Tinsel's tenants; and who is Lord Tinsel?"

"A peer of the realm, with vast landed possessions, and great influence and popularity in the county."

"Of an old family?"

"Dear me, no! His father was an army contractor, and his grandfather a carpenter. Strangely enough, he made the very cider press at my cousin Morton's."

"So much," said the Count, "for your money-loving England. This man, because he has wealth,

is toasted and looked up to, and flattered, and placed in every man's estimation higher than your cousin Morton, with all the illustrious blood of nearly a thousand years in his veins!"

"My dear fellow," replied Sir Thomas, "you foreigners don't understand us. You are right enough when you contend that the families of the English nobility are generally modern in comparison with those of your continental nobles; but you are utterly in error when you imagine your foreign families to be more ancient or illustrious than those of British gentry. Setting aside the genealogies derived from the lineage-manufactories of the Heralds-office, where Mr. Higgins can always purchase a descent from William Rufus, there are a great number of families, chiefly of Commoners, who retrace their ancestry, like my cousin Morton, as clearly as ancestry can be traced, back to the Saxon Thanes and Norman conquerors, who by the way only took your French names with your French lands. Now tell me, are there many of your proudest houses which can look back as far into the dark ages?

"You also confound your nobility with ours; but how seldom, when possessed of anything below a dukedom, have they risen in real rank above our gentry. Before the Revolution there were in France, from prince to chevalier, two hundred thousand titled people, to thirty thousand English squires."

"Well," replied the Count; "but by your own admission, Lord Tinsel has nothing in common with these."

"I grant you so," said the Baronet; "but you must needs grant me, that all over the world, the estimation of family illustration and antiquity is based upon respect to past power. Don't let us deceive ourselves, and say that it is to past virtue, because who would not sooner claim his descent from the Emperor Nero, than from the faithful slave who staunched his wound? Now in England, being an essentially practical people, whilst we have a superstitious veneration for power which is become matter of history, we have a vast deal more for that which is living and present. Lord Tinsel is a vast landed proprietor, a

stirring politician, a man of great tact, if not of any other talent; I won't quarrel about words, but I think that is a very great one. He commands two seats in the Commons, and he votes in the Lords."

"Our own peers vote in the Chambers," observed the Count.

"Yes, my dear fellow; but in the first place a peer has no influence in the Deputies, in the next he has *ex-officio* but the minutest share in the government of thirty-five millions. Lord Tinsel in his capacity of peer alone, to say nothing of his influence in the Commons, has a very much louder voice, in an empire of one hundred and fifty millions of subjects. Men in Lord Tinsel's position, when they have talent and exert it, if their party comes uppermost to-morrow, may be called to fill the highest offices under the crown, as a matter of right and conquest, not of Court favour—perhaps to a Governor-Generalship of India, with its hundred and twenty millions of subjects. When you meet with the plebeian Mr. Mellowfat, the East India director, or Ensign Smith, or Cap-

tain Jackson, asserting their equality with Colonel-Counts, inscribed on the great book of imperial nobility, they take their confidence from the consciousness of present power. Captain Jackson may be called to govern a tract of country as extensive and wealthy as a continental kingdom ; and Mr. Mellowfat, though only one of four and twenty, is at least as powerful as one of the Venetian " Council of Ten !"

" You place the matter in a new light for me," said the Count. " But is it not a singular anomaly to see such a man as Lord Tinsel, if his party comes uppermost to-morrow, seizing for himself or for his lady some Court office of your powerless royalty, as eagerly as if he were a courtier of Louis XV ?"

" Possibly; but in a very different spirit. When his party has succeeded to the power, emoluments, and honour of place, in the division of the spoil he may be obliged to put up with a barren honour for his share; but still he assumes it rather as a matter of right and conquest, a sort of trophy, than as a mark

of royal favour. On that account there is a world of difference in the estimation in which we hold such offices about the Court as are really held in virtue of a parliamentary majority, and those derived from the personal good-will and patronage of a sovereign."

"The former are opened to those who have thundered at the door; the road to the latter is too apt to be by crawling on bended knees up the back stairs."

"Still," said the Count, "notwithstanding your democratic spirit you seem with a singular complacency to crouch to royalty. Look at the fulsome protestations of loyalty on every occasion in the mouths of Whig, Radical, and Tory. Look at the royal name and the royal arms intruded everywhere. Look at your gentry crowding to kneel and kiss the hand, or bringing their wives and daughters to be saluted by some old and hoary sinner."

"This," said the Baronet, "is a matter of national taste; and you know *de gustibus*, &c. But pray do not forget that John Bull's loyalty is derived from utterly opposite causes to the

loyalty of subjects of the despotic monarchs. Their's arises from their keenly feeling that they are the sovereign's property—John Bull's from intense conviction that the sovereigns of England are his. There is Mr. Cavil, the attorney, and Mr. Oxley, the fat grazier—if they were possessed of five thousand a year to-morrow, each of them would start a portly coachman in a powdered wig—a taxable article with us—and maintain the most pompous, idle rascal he could find, in spotless stockings, and scarlet plush shorts; he would like everybody to regard his coachman and his footman with all the respect the hair powder, and the scarlet shorts were in his opinion calculated to inspire.

" On the whole, the last thing John Bull has grumbled at, has been the expence of royalty, since the sovereigns of Great Britain have become servants of the nation instead of being its masters. His wife and daughters are also interested in the Court, immediately or in expectancy, as the place where they may show off their jewels, lace, and feathers, and see the fact of their appearance recorded, and the items of

their dress chronicled for the gratification of the country, and the information of posterity, in the Court Journal or Morning Post."

"But still you will allow some inheritent servility, in the greater distance which the Englishman has voluntarily placed, between himself and royalty, than is admitted by other constitutionally governed people."

"You are mistaken in the fact. Through the past, no nation has ever behaved more unceremoniously to its Kings. During centuries it made, unmade, imprisoned, and laid ruthless hands upon them. It is true it had kings who paid the people back in kind. But at the present day, England is the only country where the gentry (a class to which wealth and talent find such easy access) still representing the old feudal chiefs, who chose one of their peers rather as leader than as sovereign, maintains the principle of chivalrous equality. In England only, the sovereigns and their children are socially but the first gentlemen, and subject to all the laws of chivalry as they have been modified to suit the days of broad-cloth and felt hats, which have

succeeded to an age of barred helmets and steel hauberks. In England only we have seen one royal Prince turned off the turf by the Jockey Club, and another forced to fight a private gentleman."

* * * *

They were in Sir Thomas's library.

"If I wished," said the Baronet, "to give you the most favourable impression of our national greatness, I should direct your attention to that shelf. You would find there the most complete accounts of our character, constitution, power, and resources."

"You surprise me," said Count Horace. "I see many French authors amongst them. I should hardly have thought that you would find much praise in our writers."

"If I might say so without offence," observed Sir Thomas, "the generality of French writers, like the generality of unlettered Frenchmen, are rather superficial, and unusually prejudiced."

"Thank you," said the Count, "that is as candid as my letter."

"But—the scientific men of France are dis-

tinguished for their profundity, and their utter freedom from prejudice—more, perhaps, than any in the world. You see here is Voltaire, as famous for warping facts to fit his own conclusions, as keen in detecting, and witty in exposing, the same defect in others. But who more thoroughly appreciated, more boldly pointed out the superiority of Locke and Newton? There is Delolme on the British Constitution, and Count Pambour on the steam engine. There is Charles Dupin, who has so accurately measured and detailed our power, resources, navy, commerce, down to our very military system. There is Gustave de Beaumont's bitter book on Ireland, more full of research and knowledge of the spirit of our institutions, than all the Raumers, Rankes, and Puckler Muskaus put together. Writing against us, what a tribute he pays to our sagacious love of liberty!

"Talk of our army,—there is Froissart, and good old Phillip de Commines to tell what superior metal it was made of in days of yore. Here you have Rogniat, Jomini, Colonel Carion Nisas, and half a score more of your

scientific modern military writers, and we must add Dupin to them. They admit that our infantry manœuvres are the most rapid of any in the world ; they admit our system, after the long experience of the last desolating wars, to be the most perfect, regretting only that it is perhaps only applicable to English soldiers. Now if you like to dip into these volumes for a couple of hours, to convince yourself, say the word."

" Oh no," laughed Count Horace. " Not I—I had sooner take my boxing lesson; I am learning to parry your blows better than your arguments."

" Come along, then," said Sir Thomas.

* * * *

The Count, along with his host, was invited to dine at the Lord Lieutenant's of the county. The Baronet appeared in a uniform covered with stars, medals, and orders.

" Sir Thomas !" exclaimed the Count, " what is this ? A fancy dress ? Are these things matters of fancy with you ? Have you any right to wear all these decorations ?"

"As far as hard service gives a man right to them," smiled Sir Thomas; "earned at the rate of a battle or two a-piece in the Peninsula."

"God bless me! to think that I should have known you four months, and never have even heard that you had served. You! who must have served with so much distinction. Abroad we should wear the ribbons of those orders in the very button-holes of our robes-de-chambre!"

"It is not our English fashion—perhaps wisely. These gewgaws prove nothing, because every soldier knows that a man may have deserved without obtaining, and have obtained without deserving them."

* * * *

When Count Horace commenced his career as a fox-hunter, he was accompanied by his Mentor to his maiden field. The Count was what was called a "joli cavalier"—he was the pride of the foreign riding school. Who could take a horse more gracefully through the coquetteries of volte and demi-volte, curvettes, and prancings? Who sit more erect in leaping

him through the bar of the *manège?* He had been a promising pupil of Franconi's; he could jump and stand erect on his saddle, and light a cigar in that posture, whilst his horse went at full gallop round the circus.

Let the reader now imagine him habited in approved scarlet, tops, and leathers—and mounted on a powerful sixteen-hands-high thorough-bred hunter, by Sir Hercules, out of Biondetta.

He who had thought himself an accomplished rider, felt like a solitary rower, trying to scull a frigate in a gale of wind. Away! like Mazeppa, he was carried after the hounds. He was borne almost unconsciously over his first fence, and his second, and his third,—but the jolt was tremendous. His breath was gone. At the fourth he grasped the rein with nervous energy, and checking his horse in its leap, brought it down with him into the ditch.

"Why, youngster," said a passing farmer, "you pulled that pretty bit of blood over upon you. Give the oss his head; if you can't lift him when he wants it, don't baulk him."

This was all the consolation he got. He made a vain appeal to a costermonger creeping through a gap in the hedge on his donkey, to see "summat of the run;" but finding that he was neither killed, nor hurt, nor pitied, he got on again, and tried his luck a little farther.

He came up with the sportsmen by a cover side.

"Your famous horse fell down with me, Sir Thomas!"

"No—you threw him down," said the farmer.

"My dear fellow," said the Baronet, "now do just try 'riding like a monkey,' as you call it. Buckle up five holes—tie the curb-rein in a knot—don't meddle with it—ride with the snaffle. Keep the horse together, and give him his head at the fences. He is a perfect hunter, or I would not have put you on him—and he will take you over where you ought to go, much better, I suspect, than you can guide him."

"Your *unmanaged* horses are like a steel spring under one!" said Count Horace; "abroad—"

"Abroad you don't ride *horses*. No one can ride horses that *are* horses, with stirrups as long as you do."

"But I assure you in the *manège*——"

"In the *manège* your horses require as much tutoring as the men. If they are vigorous, or spirited, or fit to carry a man across country, either they can never be taught at all or they are spoiled and crippled in the teaching."

"But did you ever see them ride at Franconi's?"

"My dear fellow, the riding of Astley's and Franconi's people is as much like what we call riding as dancing a minuet is like jumping, or running, or boxing. They play all kinds of tricks with their easy rocking horses, and jump over lighted lamps, spiked boards, and all that sort of thing; but put them upon horses that *can go* across country, and they are all adrift. I've seen it tried."

The next time Count Horace did buckle up. He had fallen far astern in a sharp run, but he came up at a check.

"How wonderful is the speed of your hounds."

"It is that speed enables us to hunt the fox."

"But they have very little nose."

"Find us in the world any dogs with as much nose and with their indispensable speed."

"We hunt the wolf on the continent."

"Yes, but with relays of dogs."

"Still there is no science in this fox-hunting."

"Pardon me," said Sir Thomas. "You are on one of the best horses in the kingdom. Sound, fast, thorough-bred, and master of two stone more than he carries; now look at young Smith the farmer, mounted on a forty pounder; he kept up with us; you could not. It is not that you want the boldness to take a fence, but you have not yet acquired the requisite endurance and skill. After a few miles' gallop, just when your horse wants lifting and holding together your strength is gone. You are only a dead weight in the saddle. Now in a desperate run it is plain, that mounted on exactly similar nags, Smith might be in at the death, whilst without

his skill and riding, you must be left behind. It therefore requires judgment, and coolness, and courage, and endurance to follow fox-hounds. Your foreign hunts require comparatively none of the three last named qualities."

"I grant it to you," replied the Count; "but still this sort of chase demands no science or intelligence in those who hunt the dogs, as in ours."

"Let us see, our present speed is requisite to hunt the fox without being followed by carts-full of earthstoppers with trenching tools. We require the dogs to unite sufficient sense of smell to an extraordinary rapidity. But the utmost they are found to possess proves insufficient without the judgment of the huntsman to lift them, and without his instinctive sagacity in making a cast. The fox reaches a square cover. There are four sides to it, with these fast hounds the scent will be cold in the right direction when you come to it, if you have lost your time in searching on two of the wrong sides. Now this faculty of guessing, where reynard is most likely to have skulked away, is heaven-born. The result of

great practice on an instinctive and natural aptitude. *L'homme devient cuisinier et naît rôtisseur:* so he does huntsman. Now recollect that to this qualification he must add the judgment, and boldness, and skill in riding, to be always up with his hounds. Fox-hunting," continued the enthusiastic Baronet, "thus requires inborn qualities, and acquired excellence in the huntsman, a remarkable combination of speed and nose in the dogs, unflinching boldness in those who follow them, together with coolness in danger, without which there can be no judgment; and the utmost speed, courage and endurance in their horses.

"Of the master of hounds, I will say nothing; the eloquence of Cicero, the patience of Job, the liberality of Solomon, are only a few of his requisites. In two words, he ought to be a sort of angel in top boots. In its spirit it is essentially emulative; open for every man to follow; the sweep may ride before the duke after his own hounds if he can; so that he don't ride over them. Now your foreign hunting may be followed by men of the most indifferent courage

or skill, on any sort of horses and with almost any dogs. The skill of your huntsmen and prickers is indeed the result of great experience; but it is what the dullest man cannot fail to learn in time, just as every man, by dint of practice, may learn to hunt harriers. Besides this, it is with you, exclusive, and generative of an envious instead of a cordial feeling between high and low. In France and Belgium, every proprietor will prosecute you with the utmost malignity for riding over his fallows or his stubble. And in the length of an English drawing-room you may cross the patches of a dozen owners."

Count Horace was returning with the Baronet from an election scene. As their object had been to see the fun, they were suitably arrayed. Their costume was of that sort which may appertain either to a gentleman or to a blackguard, but has nothing of the vulgarity of the snob. It united the beauties of drab capes and belcher handkerchiefs, and wide-awake hats, and could not be called nondescript, because accurately defined in the phraseology of the vulgar by the word "varmint."

The weather was tempestuous, and the rain began to pour down in such torrents, that they sought in eager haste the inviting shelter of a pot-house. They called for brandy and cigars. The public-house, though at some distance from the field of action, chanced to be a buff-house, and was at that moment filled by an uproarious detachment of the defeated buff rabblement. All eyes were turned on the new comers, who were unluckily still wearing their blue ribbons.

Whilst the crowd were still in the silence of amazement at the assurance which had dared to sport the odious colours in the very centre of a buff den, the Count thought proper to inquire, in very audible French, what was the matter.

"Mounseer Jack Frog!" said a bill-sticker, whose political convictions had been shocked at the ribbon itself, but whose inmost patriotism was outraged to see it on the person of a Frenchman, "what business have you with that thingumbob? Don't you know that this is a land of liberty?" In practical illustration of which sentiment, he unceremoniously tore off the party sign.

The Count's good humour vanished. "How do you dare?" he said indignantly.

"Punch his head," roared one of the buffs.

"Knock him into the middle of next week," suggested another.

"I'll knock your head off, bully, if you do," said the Baronet, who saw they were in for it.

"Bully yourself," retorted the bill-sticker; "wouldn't you like to hit a man half your size?"

"Come away," whispered the Count. "I wish I could have caught that fellow away from his gang; but here they would murder us."

"Not at all: if you think you can lick him," replied the Baronet; "and, upon my soul, I think you can."

"Pitch into the monkey Frenchman, Jim! why don't you?"

"Down with the big bully, if he interferes," cried a score of voices.

"Oh," said Sir Thomas, "my friend is ready enough to fight."

"Is he? Well, that aint bad for a Frenchman!"

"Out in the shed! make a ring."

Count Horace's blood was up: he took off his coat, and went to work. He was too much excited to be cool; but he possessed a great deal of agility, and some science,—his adversary none. Unluckily, at the very outset, his foot slipped on the wet ground, and he fell.

"How dare you? What! would you? Would you strike a man when he is down?" cried the bill-sticker's partisans.

To the surprise of Count Horace, he was assisted to rise, and asked if he was ready to go on.

"Go it, Jim; hit him between wind and water! Now then, Jim! go in and win!" shouted the buff backers.

But notwithstanding the popular encouragement, "Jim," who was three parts fuddled, who swung his arms about like the sails of a windmill, and never at best possessed much skill or courage,—soon gave way before the well-directed shower of blows aimed by the impetuous Count Horace.

"Holloa! well done, Jack Frog! Pay him back, Jim! He is a Blue and a Frenchman!"

"No," said the bill-sticker. "I give in,—that'll do."

"Hurrah! hurrah! Brayvo, Jack Frog!"

Sir Thomas stopped his pupil's arm, in the midst of the shouts; and Count Horace, thus restrained, understood that his foe was vanquished; but with his victory his consciousness returned, and he remembered that he was in the midst of a gang. He was about to suggest the urgency of an attempt at flight, when he was brought to understand their congratulations.

"That'll do for one day," said the Baronet; "but give back the bow you snatched away, if you have had a belly-full."

"Oh yes! that's fair, if he won't fight,—give it back! Cursed cur, that Jim! no more pluck than a pigeon,—but let them go! Three cheers for the Frenchman! he has done what no other two ever did before, licked an Englishman—three cheers for Mounseer, and six groans for his blue ribbon."

"As for that," said the Baronet, "my lads! here is my friend's ribbon and mine too,—do what you like with them."

" Hurrah!" shouted the buffs,—" what does Mounseer say?"

" He says," replied Sir Thomas, " that he won't wear it, because the blue is almost as dirty as the buff."

" Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah." At this piece of independence he was cheered three times louder. " Brayvo! He is game to the back bone. His mother must have fed him on roast beef when frogs was ris!"

And amid the buff plaudits, the Count made his exit, arm-in-arm with his friend.

" You have just seen a specimen of the lower orders, in the full excitement of liquor and electioneering. Does there exist in any other people the same sense of fair play? Where but in England would an angry mob allow a pot companion to be thrashed by a stranger, a foreigner, and an enemy, and allow the victor to escape scot free? Where not allow him to be struck when down, or off his guard, or when he had surrendered?"

" I confess," replied the Count, " that any-

where else in Europe, they would all have fallen upon us."

"This," observed Sir Thomas, "is the chivalry of the vulgar; if not originating in pugilism, it is at least perpetuated by what is called 'the brutalizing pastime of the ring.' It is like cockfighting, which your square-toed people have long since classed with cock-shying and bull-baiting, as mere unredeemed cruelty. But I say, that the contemplation of the utmost animal heroism which two game cocks display, is apt to excite some emulation in the spectator; and that it has not been unobserved by the vulgar is evident, since with them 'game' has become the synonyme for courage and endurance. For my own part, I do not think it quite so cruel as cooking some hundred shrimps, which are boiled alive for the breakfast of some worthy soul who writes, or of some gentle reader who reads the touching paragraphs in which the sport is stigmatised.

"Here comes the stage; let us get up; but there is only room behind."

It was a short-stage coach; on the same side with them was a female with a bundle, she complained of being a little sick; opposite to them were two journeymen and a smug tradesman.

"Will you move, ma'am?" said one of the journeymen, "perhaps it's your back to the horses."

"Oh no," observed the tradesman, "*that* is always a mere fancy."

"Thank you," replied the lady, "I *do* feel a sort of come-over-ishness."

"Change places, Sam," said the journeyman to his companion.

"Here, ma'am," exclaimed Sam; "but come," he continued to the tradesman, who had shown no inclination to accommodate her, "you had better move; here is a lady as aint well, —you would'nt have her sit outside, would you?"

"Oh certainly," said the surly tradesman; and he gave the woman up the central place.

"Now," observed Sir Thomas, "is it not a

calumny to say that the lower orders of English want gallantry, in their rough way?"

It must not be imagined that Count Horace took everything for granted, or without due inquiry,—that being, as we have seen, of an excitable temperament he was carried by the reaction of conviction a little beyond the line of truth, within the limits of exaggeration. Even Sir Thomas soon became tired of the very enthusiasm he had worked up in his Telemachus, and of the task of cicerone. So probably is the reader by this time, and so undoubtedly is the author, and therefore we will cease to follow him.

"My good Sir Thomas!" said the Count, on the eve of his embarkation, with English horses, dogs, top coats, and double guns, in a high state of Anglo-mania, "my good Sir Thomas, with a few exceptions, I could almost be of your opinion in thinking yours the land of perfection."

"My opinion!" repeated Sir Thomas; "pray don't say *my* opinion. There is not a thing in the infernal country—from beginning to end—

that I would not alter and remodel;—the cant—the hypocrisy—the waste—the meanness—the ostentation — the roguery — the oppression! Don't say *my* opinion. There is not one thing I would not change radically, if I could; but—not on the model of the continent, my boy!"

CHAPTER VII.

Count Horace awoke one morning in St. Petersburg, his temples throbbed, his blood felt feverish and drowsy, and he would again have yielded to the influence of sleep still weighing heavily on his eyelids, had he not been startled by the strangeness of the bed. He did not recognize its counterpane and hangings of rich brocaded silk, or its cambric-covered pillows with their trimmings of Mechlin lace. Where was he? As he rubbed his eyes and with them rubbed up his recollections, it occurred to him that he had been supping the night before with Prince Isaakoff, the son of

the late millionnaire, just returned to claim his inheritance.

The last thing Horace could recall to memory was an attempt to quaff, for the second time, an enormous crystal goblet, a sort of cup of Hercules sparkling with champagne punch; and he thence concluded that, in the same manner as many of the Prince's guests before him, he had succumbed to the mighty potation.

Prince John Isaakoff had always been "one of the best fellows in the world," and now he was one of the richest. Horace had known him in Paris, in Italy, and on the Rhine; and though there was no striking similarity in their ideas or predilections, they had gone through together some of the most stirring scenes of Horace's gayest years, and they had always been on terms of unusual intimacy. Concluding, therefore, that he must have been put to sleep in an apartment of the Isaakoff palace, he jumped out of bed, and looked around him.

The room in which he was united the taste of Paris with the comfort peculiar to English dwellings, in its furniture and decorations. On

each side of the English bed, from which he had just risen, were doors of richly carved walnut wood, impanelled, as well as the wall above them, with paintings in the style of Lemoine and Blanchard.

A scene of bathing-nymphs, or Diana and Actæon, the toilet of Venus, or mermaids arranging their dripping hair, served to indicate respectively the entrance to the baths or dressing rooms. The chimney-piece was of finely sculptured Carrara marble, and reflected in the glass above it, the massive clock with the gilded group supporting it, and two costly vases of Malachite found in the possessions of their owner. These vases were empty, though always filled in the winter with flowers, when flowers, now in full season and abundance, were rare and worth their weight in gold.

Within this chimney-piece was an English grate with all its appurtenances, and to tempt one to loll in beside it when blazing with sea-coal luxurious spring chairs around the hearth-rug.

He drew aside the window-curtain, the spring blind rolled up to the touch, and the massive sheet of plate glass glided noiselessly on one

side in its mahogany frames. The broad rapid Neva flowed before him, the sky was clear and sunny as on the shores of the Mediterranean, and shewed the transparent purity of the cold and arrowy waters in which its cloudless blue was mirrored.

The gilded spire of the fortress opposite glittered in the sun, beyond it the domes of many Byzantine churches, green, and starred, and tipped with gold, in the suburb of the Peterbourskoi Storonè; for the northern bank of the Neva and all the islands of its delta on which the city was originally founded, and which Peter the Great intended should sustain another Amsterdam, the holy city of his dreams, has continued with the exception of one—the Vasili Ostroff—still marsh or wood, converted into market-gardens or promenades sprinkled with villas. Such part of the city as has gathered around that which he first erected, has sunk into a mere suburb where wooden houses, and the bearded population, and the Muscovite churches, with their melon-shaped domes and minarets, have taken refuge.

The palaces, the magnificence, the inappro-

priate classic architecture, with its colonades and peristyles, has crept over the mainland of the southern shore. The very statue of the grim old Peter is raised there; but he is pointing with his outstretched hand towards the island, as if the sculptor had imbued the bronze with the mind and tongue of the original, and that turning his back on all the Greek and Latin palaces, he was saying, "There is where I meant to found my city."

As the river here swells to embrace in many arms its islands, it is very wide. Being above the bridge, no craft ascend but the frigate brigs and yachts which lie opposite the windows of the winter palace, on a line with which rose the mansion of Prince John Isaakoff.

There only floated therefore on its surface, the unwieldy and gigantic rafts or barques drifted down, to end here, perhaps a three years' voyage having come some thousand miles from the vicinity of the Caspian, or from the interior of the Empire, laden with its produce. In singular contrast to these, hundreds of gondolas, gaily painted, with awnings and with high galley-

shaped poops, glided backwards and forwards, to carry on the communication between the opposite banks of the river.

As Horace turned to seek the bell, a Russian servant stood before him, and with a low salaam threw open a vast wardrobe, where he found an assortment of dressing gowns and slippers; and at the same moment he was hailed by the voice of the Prince through the open doors of the adjacent apartment. But when he entered the room it seemed empty, till the servant drew aside a screen, and his host was discovered lying on a sofa in his robe-de-chambre. The sheets, the pillows, and the satin coverlet shewed that he had slept there.

"How have you slept, my dear Horace? We were not in a condition to move far from the scene of action. The next is the room where we supped. So I had you carried to my own bed."

"A very touching act of friendship," replied Horace, "but which I should more have appreciated had I not seen that you Russians never seem to sleep on beds."

"Not very often, it is true, for though there

are forty beds I suppose in this house, they might go six months without being slept in. There are many weighty reasons for preferring a couch; in the first place—Dimitri, are you there?" No Dimitri answered, and then the Prince gave utterance to his jest; "My groom of the chambers has the same idea of sleeping in a bed that the Grand Duke Constantine has of campaigning with an army."

"What is that?"

"He says it spoils the bed; and the Grand Duke says that fighting spoils the soldiers' uniforms. But the fact is, my dear fellow, you do not know the luxury of it."

"I can conceive that one may soon learn to consider it as but slight hardship; but I do not understand its becoming exactly a luxury," replied Horace.

"Ah, you have not experienced the delightful ease of putting on your schlafrock and slippers before you go to supper; you sit down to it, you get very drunk perhaps, and are quietly wheeled to where you mean to sleep, or masked by a screen as I was last night; and here you may be, as I

am, ready to drink your tea, or to receive without having stirred from your couch. It is an Orientalism you will learn to appreciate in time. But I hope, my dear Horace, that you have not forgotten on your feather bed the promise you made last night?"

"What promise?"

"To go with me to my estates, and to remain here till we depart."

"Did I so promise?"

"Did you not vow so?"

"Well, Isaakoff, if I did, the vow is not quite so rash as that of Iphigenia's sire."

"You don't know that; you do not know what our Russian country seats are like," replied the Prince; "but anyhow I keep you to your promise. Will you take tea now?"

"Directly I am washed."

"Then make haste, for I have a world of business to go through to-day. Just imagine one of those days so happily gone by, when my doors were besieged with creditors, and I was plunged in schemes to raise the wind, or bolster up my battered credit; imagine, a day just as

busy before one, with looking through the inventory of one's houses, lands, mines, and peasants, besieged by one's obsequious vassals."

When Horace had completed a hasty toilet, he found the door of the room in which he left his host shut too: the lock was one of those new patents, so exceedingly clever in contrivance, as to puzzle all ordinary comprehension to shut it when open, or to open it when shut. They were double doors; so instead of knocking Horace adventurously resolved to find his way round by the staircase.

It was a noble staircase of white marble, the chisel of the sculptor had wreathed the balustrade with carvings delicately frail, of the leaves, and fruit, and branches of the vine.

Two servants in a somewhat tawdry livery threw open a door; he traversed one dimly lighted apartment, and then stood within another of very large dimensions, in the midst of a vast crowd of bearded Russian plebeians, and of bearded and unbearded servants in and out of livery.

His progress was arrested by those around him falling prostrate on the inlaid floor, and kissing the hem of his dressing gown. He had some difficulty in disengaging himself and in proceeding onward; though as he did so it was obvious that he had been mistaken for the Prince, until the valet Dimitri led him back to where Isaakoff was still upon his sofa. The sheets and pillows had been removed; the Prince was no longer lying but reclining, his legs still underneath the coverlet, and a long Turkish pipe in his mouth.

He laughed heartily at his guest's adventure.

"Those are my domestic servants, a hundred and fifty of them I think I hear there are, and a few of my serfs, all anxious to get a glimpse of the rising sun. Do you take tea, Horace?"

"Oh I take tea ever since I have been in England."

The Prince clapped his hands; it is an Oriental fashion in which the Russians still indulge, and is more convenient than ringing a bell which you have to lift from a table beside you.

"You never drank *tea* in England, the English have no more conception of good tea than you have in France of good coffee."

"You are pleased to be paradoxical."

"No, I am matter of fact; they neither drink good tea, nor coffee, nor chocolate in England, good tea never; for the reason that you cannot make coffee in France,—they have nothing but a coarse leaf, and in France you never have the finest Mocha berry."

"And yet I had considered them as staple productions of their respective kitchens."

"Nothing can be more erroneous; it is plain that the preparation of any such beverage must depend on the quality of the material, as much as on the skill in brewing it. Now the material for tea is wanting in England; the finest imported is coarse flavoured, and they draw it so long and make it so strong that the infusion becomes too astringent and bitter, to be drinkable without cream or milk; now cream or milk added to our high flavoured teas would be like adding beer to Burgundy."

"As for coffee, the finest Mocha berry is

nearly unknown; and when they have it they do not understand the art of drawing out its flavour and aroma—just as with chocolate, which ought to be the pure cacao nut deprived by roasting of all its volatile oil, and a fitting food for the most delicate stomach. By mixing it with milk in England, and with cream and eggs in France, they convert it into a beverage cloying and offensive.

"In France with the coffee, as with the tea in England, excellence is impossible, because the best Mocha is nowhere used. They may draw out all that is in the berry, but make always a beverage flavourless, acid, and heating, with which the *habitués* of your coffee houses are satisfied, and which travelling Englishmen admire."

"We will try," said Horace, "how far your own bears out your criticism."

"But what do you smoke?" And on a signal, an attendant, who might be called the slave of the pipe, brought forth a case containing cigars of every age, and hue and description, together with a lighted taper. "Or will you try the Turkish

nargileh, or the Indian hookah, or the simple Turkish pipe, so great a favourite in Russia, with the red clay bowl and cherry stick, and amber mouth-piece, or some of the German meerschaum or staghorn pipes; I have plenty in my collection, though we consider them low and vulgar, and only fit for Calbashniks."

"What are Calbashniks?"

"Oh, it is the popular name for Germans; it means sausage-makers; they are called more politely Niemetz or dummies, a name singularly inappropriate, particularly when applied to their students."

"What are you smoking?"

"The Jukoff tobacco, a Russian preparation; an acquired taste, and one which you will probably not like."

The tea, a very weak infusion, was poured out from several minute teapots, into tumblers, and served with sugar and slices of lemon, and soukarees, or Russian rusks.

"What without cream? said Horace;" this would hardly suit an English palate."

"Don't talk of comparing English tea to the

Russian, you might as well liken the coarsest gin to the finest vintage of Johannisberg."

"I will send to my Tartar coachman for some of the tea his people use, pressed into a brick and looking like a cake of greaves; they cut it with an axe, boil it in milk for hours, and that you will find more like your English tea. Try this, it is the finest green, it is worth forty shillings a pound; here are several sorts of the yellow tea, costing about the double: what do you say to them?"

"The green is certainly magnificent; its perfume is delicious. The others are very fragrant also, but then they do not taste like tea at all; I still like cream or milk, and cups."

"Ah, if you were a connoisseur, you would know that a drop of milk spoils so delicate a flavour, and then you would appreciate the luxury of seeing it sparkle in a tumbler in the true Muscovite fashion."

"Now let us try your pipe," said Count Horace, and as his notice was attracted by a boat passing on the river, he kneeled on the Prince's sofa and attempted to lean over it; but his knee rested on something that moved

under him like a creeping mass of flesh, although it was beyond the Prince's feet, and a hoarse cry seemed to proceed from under the satin coverlet.

As the Count started back in terror, a gigantic head, with grizzled hair and bushy eyebrows scowled out upon him from beneath it, and then snapped its teeth like an angry dog, and continued muttering at him. Whilst Isaakoff was still convulsed with laughter, the body pertaining to the enormous head, which scarcely exceeded it in volume disengaged itself slowly from its covering, and a dwarf of the minutest proportions descended carefully from the canopy, still chattering and grinning like a furious ape.

"Do you know what he says?" laughed the Prince, "that you may well look afraid, though you are so big. Come! Archib, that will do, go to your place."

"Well I confess, that I was startled; but as I would not purposely have hurt the little creature, pray tell him so."

"Oh that is needless, he is very old and half idiotic, he does not know even me, he mistakes

me for my father, who was singularly kind to all his slaves, particularly to this poor Archib, who has taken his death so much to heart that it has still further deranged his senses. My father used him for the last twenty years as a foot-warmer, and having found his way in here this morning, he proceeded at once to his old place. It was on this very sofa that the old gentleman died; was it not Dietrich?"

These words were addressed to a man habited in black, who had just entered, smooth, oily, and subservient in his aspect, with a head like a pimple, on his rotund little body.

"High, well-born Prince!" returned Dietrich, with a bow in which was concentrated as much abject submissiveness as in the prostration of all the domestics who had kissed the ground before Horace put together, "High well-born Prince! on this very sofa it was that the spirit of your late lamented father passed away, in the arms of your faithful humble servant. It must be a melancholy satisfaction to you, my high and well-born master, to know that he was visited in his last moments by his Imperial Highness the

Grand Duke Constantine Paulovitch. Two hours he had lain groaning incessantly, clasping the doctor's hand so tight in his that he could not disengage it, when I saw from the window his Imperial Highness descend from his carriage. On this announcement, your father started up—'Dietrich,' he said, 'Dietrich, my excellent, my worthy steward! make haste, my regulation coat, my senator's uniform, are all my orders on it Dietrich? my St. Vladinir, my St. Stanislas, my St. George, and my St. Anne?'

"Would you believe it, my high, well-born master, that the Grand Duke was upon us before we could fasten the last hook and eye of the collar? It was the only thing for which my poor master rebuked me when he was dying; but on the back of his neck he had an open blister, and I was obliged to handle him tenderly. I saw the Grand Duke's eye rest on the unfastened collar; but his merciful Highness made no remark.

"Eight hours after, my noble master expired; and his last words were; 'Dietrich, it was not po formè, it was not according to regulation; I know how a button undone angers all that

family, and leads too often to a man's undoing; I hope the Grand Duke may not remember it when he comes across my son. Oh Dietrich! Dietrich, it was not po formè,' and so, my Lord; he closed his blessed eyes."

"Idiotic gossip," muttered the Prince, and then he continued, "so, Dietrich, I hear that my lamented father remained to the last as he had always been, too good and easy for his knavish people."

"My high and well-born master, who is a saint in heaven now," replied Dietrich looking up as if to catch a glimpse of the deceased in his mind's eye. "My high and well-born master was a real angel upon earth, I always thought so, but never more than when he got too fat to walk, and that his slaves carried him from one room to another on his chair or sofa."

"Dietrich," he used to say, "I should like to go into the picture gallery; but I do not like to give those lads the trouble. When a man is too obese to move he should lie still."

"I know he was always too easy to his slaves," said the Prince sternly; "but I have

some reason to suspect that he was mighty easy with his agents also; I am not so, master Dietrich, we will look closely into accounts."

"Oh! my Lord," said Dietrich, "those will be happy moments. How many years past have I longed for some occasion which might bring my probity to light. These fourteen winters past I have been keeping your lamented father's books; there are forty thousand souls upon the property, and I might almost make bold to say that scarcely a cow has eaten a pound of hay or a hen laid an egg which I have not accounted for; but your lamented father, my high well-born master, though on New Years' day I always placed all the last year's account as it were under his eye to court his leisure, would never look into them."

"Never mind, we will," said the Prince, "figure by figure."

Here Dietrich threw open the door of an adjacent cabinet, which had something the appearance of a stationer's warehouse: shelves all round the walls groaned under the weight of bundles of paper, and account-books, and

solid piles of manuscript ascended to the ceiling in columns and half columns.

"What! are these all the accounts of the fourteen years of your stewardship arrayed in battle to alarm me?"

"Oh! no," said Dietrich mildly, "these are only the documents which relate to the receipts and profits of the estate for the two quarters commencing last January and terminating at midsummer."

"Oh! indeed!"

"Would you like, my high and well-born master, to go into them directly?"

"No, I think I will breakfast before I go *through* them," said the Prince.

"Whenever my high and well-born master pleases; but he may judge how anxious I am that he should leave nothing unexamined. Let me put it to you, my Lord, is it not natural, when one has watched for years, when one has shaved and pared to see that not a single kopek should be misapplied or wasted, saying always: Dietrich, is it because thy master hath forty thousand slaves and a million and a half of

roubles revenue, is it because thy master dreads the sight of figures, that thou shouldst allow one copper to be wasted? No, Dietrich. And then when one has kept so sharp a watch for fourteen years, that not a rat has gnawed at a cheese-paring without its skin being converted into money, is it to be wondered that one should long for a gracious master to look through one's accounts and books, and say: Hark'ye mine honest humble-minded Dietrich, though those who envy thee say that thou plunderest and thievest, God save the mark! I have cast up one and one, and two and two, and find that thou art true as gold thrice proven in the furnace."

"Dietrich," said the Prince, "thou art become a thorough Russian in one thing."

"My Lord, I am flattered."

"Dietrich, thou smellest like a Russian."

"If my Lord says so, I lament it," said Dietrich cringingly.

"Go away now, send Dimitri with pastilles, I'll call thee when I want thee."

"Body and soul," said Dietrich bowing low, "I am always at the disposal of my high and well-born master."

"I'll dispense with the body just now," said the Prince.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Dietrich as he bowed himself out, "excellent! very excellent! witty, witty, very—very—very witty!"

"What is that fellow?" said Horace.

"A knave," replied the Prince, "a very transparent one."

"But is he a Russian?"

"A Russian subject, but a German, born in our German provinces; we frequently use these people as overseers, because we cannot trust our own."

"But knave for knave, why not employ Russians?"

"I mean to try it," replied the Prince; "but there is this advantage in a German, that he is a reasonable knave, who can let an apple ripen on the bough without plucking it eagerly off whilst green. He looks to keep his place, and therefore moderates his avidity. He will

not kill the goose that lays the golden eggs, or take more than the fleece from the sheep's back, but our Russians are in a constant fever, their fingers itch till they have potted all the goose-grease, and stripped off all the sheep's skin with its fleece, though they know that there will never be any wool to gather afterwards. A Russian in Dietrich's place could hardly refrain from purloining two lumps of sugar from that basin if our eyes were averted, though risking a situation in which he pilfers more than the amount of Count Nesselrode's salary. But then he has more in his character of the traits which Cicero paints in Catiline when he calls him covetuous of that of others, lavish of his own. The Russian, at Easter, would purchase half a dozen sleighs of frozen meat to distribute in charity, magnificent diamonds for his wife, and make a rich offering to his saint; now all the charity and devotion of such a fellow as Dietrich would be concentrated on his own spherical little person. There is another advantage too with a Russian, if he be your own serf and that you keep him so, (one that I really regret when I

look upon Dietrich,) as your Shakspeare says of the courtier, he is like a spunge.

You do but squeeze him and he is dry again."

"Do you know," said Count Horace, "that admirable as your Russian tea may be and crisp and brown as are your *soukarees*, they do not come up to my ideas of a breakfast, though they may do to break a fast."

"Oh! do not indulge the belief that this is breakfast, you shall breakfast presently, as luxuriously as a French artiste and a Russian *pover* can prepare a repast so important."

At this moment Dimitri announced a visitor in the person of *Gospodine* Jakof.

"Ah! Mr. Jakof. See, Horace, how the bees flock round the sugar, even when their own honey bags are full. Last time I was in Petersburg, this very fellow, who was richer than I am, affected to keep out of my way, lest I should borrow money from him."

Mr. Jakof was a young man with a prominent nose, and a countenance indicative of uncommon obtuseness. The exceeding floridity

of his complexion, and the vulgar coarseness of his features, gave him somewhat of the appearance of a butcher boy; if one could imagine a butcher boy in tortoise-shell spectacles, which he wore. He was habited in a cut-a-way coat of outrageous fashion, adorned with gigantic buttons; around his neck was a handkerchief tied in an enormous bow, and the hat he carried in his hand was of that shape which facetious London hatters display in their windows with the superscription of tippy-bobby. He had a piece of cotton stuffed in each ear, lavender coloured Parisian ladies' boots upon his feet, a Malacca hunting whip in his hand, and three bull terriers following his heels.

"Ah, my dear Savè," said the Prince, embracing him, "how long since we have met. But first let me make known to you my friend Horace de Montressan—my friend, my inseperable, my more than brother; in fact, with your luxuriant imagination, conceive us to be two bodies animated by a common soul."

"Ah!" said Jakof, who notwithstanding the insinuation of the Prince, did not exactly

look an imaginative being, "I do conceive a Pilate and Orestes—I am honoured."

"Exactly," returned Isaakoff, "we are even more closely united in the bonds of friendship than Pontius Pilate and Orestes were. Now, Count Horace, let me make known to you my intimate—Savè Jakof—a fellow *Anglomane*." (The Prince slily thrust his tongue into his cheek as he said this). "If he lives he will inherit one of the largest fortunes in Russia; if he dies to-morrow, the moral portion of his Imperial Majesty's subjects will get rid, with him, of one of their greatest eye-sores."

"You are too modest," said Jakof, who gloried in the reputation of "*rouérie*," which his meanness had alone prevented him from deserving. "Here are you returned from Paris—a fitting subject truly to rail at those, whom an Imperial will keeps by their humble chimney corner."

Jakof was hardly seated when Dimitri announced fresh visitors.

"Flies! flies! flies!" said Isaakoff, "attracted by the lump of sugar."

"Of course," said Jakof, "all the town knows that you have come into a million and a half of roubles a year. Do as I do, never play high, never lend, never buy of your friends—I never do. I dine at Dulong's, and give everybody plenty of champaign; but beyond that, your humble servant."

"Ah!" observed the Prince, "it would be more economical to omit the champaign."

"I've tried it," said Jakof; "they won't stay; they go off to play elsewhere."

"I should feel flattered by such society;" said Isaakoff; but as he spoke the Count Lochadoff, Monsieur Lesseps, and Sergius Durakoff were introduced.

"Count Horace," said the Prince, "allow me to present to you Monsieur Lesseps, your talented countryman—with these gentlemen I see you are acquainted."

"Are we to congratulate you?" said Count Lochadoff, throwing off a light grey cloak, and showing the undress uniform of the guards.

"Why, my friends," returned Isaakoff, "you are all aware that I have come into a fortune by the death of a parent, with whom I had long

since ceased to be on terms the most amicable—a fortune too which I should have soon become past the age of enjoying. Without being very stony hearted, I do not exactly see the justice of attaching peculiar stringency to any natural ties of relationship, when unaccompanied by other bonds. My late father was an excellent man in his way; but then he lavished all his affection on his slaves, and had none left for his son; it is their place to weep for him. On the whole, if I could recall the old gentleman to life to share my fortune with me, I would do it; but as I can't, considering that death is the common lot, that all regret is useless, and that there are several circumstances to qualify the bitterness of mine, I h ave resolved not to make my house a house of mourning. Why, in any case, should we seek to cloud the spirits of our friends with our own domestic sorrows, when no sympathy can recall the dead?"

"I am glad to see you take it so philosophically," said Lochadoff.

"Take what?—his million and half per annum philosophically," interrupted Jakof.

"Though," continued Lochadoff, "who would not have excused some want of stoicism on the death of a father?"

"Ah!" said Jakof, "Lochadoff! we all know that the funeral elegance of marble and of speech—the poetry and sentiment of sorrow is understood in your family. He is the man, Isaakoff, to teach you what is proper on such occasions—he has mourned over four fathers."

"You see," interrupted Monsieur Lesseps, who appeared one of those men who wrapped up in the triple armour of their conceit, their ignorance, and want of sensibility, are always running foul of the delicacies and decencies of refined society, which they never understand, even when born it; but which when raised to it fortuitously in after life, they trample down as unconsciously as an ox does the flowers in a tulip bed. "You see, Count," he said, addressing himself familiarly to Horace, "the jest is the most charming in the world; for our friend Lochadoff has really had four fathers; his lady mother has really buried four husbands. She is said to have married for the sake of peopling a

little Père la Chaise, which she has established in her English garden, adorned with tasty monuments and a Gothic chapel, with the fret work of cast iron painted stone colour, for which her architect charged her twenty thousand louis. It is a pet spot, which she takes all her friends to see. She has always kept a portfolio full of elegant designs of tombs and cenotaphs; and she has always had some models got ready with each wedding trousseau."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Jakof. "How do they say she got rid of them? Tell him that."

"Why that," continued Lesseps, "was very simple. She chose them, after consulting her doctor, according to their prospects of a speedy dissolution. Just with the hair-trigger set, as one might say, quite ready to go off—at least so it is reported,"

The Count Lochadoff coloured slightly, and coughed to conceal his embarrassment and annoyance.

"Ah!" continued Lesseps, "our lieutenant coughs—a hollow cough—I hope it is con-

sumptive, for his lady mother's sake. When the Russians learned her sepulchral taste, she seduced a foreigner into matrimony; but now unhappily the Greek church interferes, and will not allow a fifth husband, though all the continent of Europe is open to her choice."

"Perhaps I might suggest," observed Lochadoff, "that you would have shown quite as much delicacy in choosing another object for your scandal."

"Oh! no offence, young gentleman," returned Lesseps. "I neither intended any, nor care if I gave it. You must take me as you find me. I learned to speak out what I think loudly and roughly enough when I was a drummer; for I began life, gentlemen, by rattling on calf-skin; and when I became *maître d'armes*, I acquired the art, which I have not forgotten, of answering with a yard of steel for all that I have roughly spoken."

"Come," said Isaakoff, "we all know that his tongue is licensed. But let us hear what is passing in the Chevalier guards. What makes you look so sleepy, Lochadoff?"

"I was at parade this morning at six, so I was awakened at two to get on my leather breeches, and could not afterwards get to sleep."

"I am afraid," said Horace, "that if you do not dress more speedily, you could not get very quickly to horse in case of an alarm."

"My good Sir," replied Lochadoff, "I see you do not know what an affair our buckskins are—to make them set properly we are obliged to put them on damp, and to let them dry upon the body."

"I'll tell you what," said Horace; "for my own part I would sooner go to parade in a pair of shorts as loose as a Dutch skipper's."

"Yes," observed Jakof, "and get a week's arrest for every crease. Oh no, I've tried that myself."

"By-the-bye," said Durakoff, "talking of arrests, I must tell you how nearly a soldier in our regiment baffled the Emperor."

"Oh that is old," interrupted Jakof.

"Not to those who have never heard it, dolt. I have heard nothing," said Isaakoff, "so go on."

"Give me another pipe, Dimitri, and I proceed. Know then, that Nicolas Paulovitch was driving down the Newsky prospect on the last spring snow—I need not tell you how sharp an eye he has for detecting all military delinquencies—the week before last he sent my cousin to the Caucausus for wearing white kid gloves; and it is only three days since he condemned one of my brother officers to a month's arrest for being in full dress when undress was the order of the day for the hour at which he was detected."

"How is that?" exclaimed Horace.

"My dear fellow," said Isaakoff, "you have no idea of our service, particularly in the guards. Now in Lochadoff's regiment they have innumerable dresses for different occasions. The white cloth coat, black and gold cuirass, helmets, jack-boots, and buckskins for one dress; another without the boots or cuirass; an undress of two or three descriptions; a palace dress of scarlet with silk stockings, and so on *ad infinitum*. A man may have to wear alternately in one morning the cap, the helmet, or

cocked hat, with the cocktail feathers. The Emperor or the Grand Duke regulates day by day arbitrarily the hours and occasions on which they shall respectively be worn ; and woe to the wretch who transgresses. Now then, proceed."

"The Emperor," resumed Durakoff, "was thus proceeding down the Newsky prospect, alive and watchful as he is when he catches sight of a uniform, when he espied a soldier of our regiment in the condition we call 'slavè bogu.' It means 'praise to the Lord;' and answers to your French expression of 'being in the Lord's vineyard.' In a word, he was very drunk. 'Come here,' said the Emperor, 'jump up behind my sledge, and I will give you a ride to your barracks, and order you five hundred lashes. Here, hold on by the sleeve of my cloak that I may feel that you have not rolled down in the snow like a beast, as you are. The soldier thanked him very fervently and humbly, as soldiers and peasants do with us when promised favours of that description. It deprecates wrath, they say. Now the Emperor held on at the cloak just as an

angler feels the fish at the end of his line; and away they drove to the barracks. When they arrived the officer on duty was called out.

"'Harkye,' said Nicolas, 'take that drunken hound, who is behind my sledge, and shut him up till he is sober, then give him five hundred lashes.'

"'I hear and obey,' said the officer; 'but please your Imperial Majesty, I see only two soldiers in the street—two mounted Cossacks just turning the corner, whom I will instantly pursue. Which is it?'

"'Ah! fool! whose mother I have defiled!' said the Emperor. 'I mean the man who is behind my sledge.'

"But as the Emperor turned mechanically round to look, there was no soldier there; but the sleeve of his cloak was cunningly fastened to the sash.

"'Oh!' roared the Emperor, 'I have defiled thy mother! I have defiled thy mother! I have defiled thy mother! The rascal has got off; but I'll be even with him; he shall not escape. Drive on.'

"The next morning the regiment was drawn out in one rank, and the Emperor himself came to inspect it. He quietly desired that the delinquent would step forward; but the delinquent knew better. Then the Emperor's brow lowered, and he walked along the line, looking into every man's face, and making his teeth chatter. But you know he endeavours to sort the men so carefully, he causes the soldier's hair to be cropped so close, and their moustachios to be cut so exactly in the same trim and blackened so accurately to the same hue with tallow and lamp-black, that for once he was utterly at fault. The Emperor chafed; the Colonel was in despair, and in vain implored the offender to come forward and be flogged, for the credit of the regiment. At length a free pardon was promised; but yet no one came forward. Still Nicolai Paulovitch swore that he would find him out; and then he offered not only a free pardon, but a hundred roubles and a week's holiday. Now a hundred roubles, to a poor soldier who receives only about seven shillings a year and is fond of brandy, was too strong a

temptation. He stepped forward and confessed. The Emperor looked at him, and sent him back into the ranks—his curiosity and his anger were gratified."

"His curiosity," said Horace, "but not his anger, for I suppose he kept his promise."

"Oh yes, as to the pardon, and so he did as to the hundred roubles; but then the soldier drank, and of course the colonel found that he was drunk. He was condemned to run the gauntlet through three hundred men, and when his sentence was sent to the Emperor for approbation, he wrote down approved, but to run the gauntlet twice through six hundred men. And serve the fool right, for he had it all his own way once."

"Not quite so certain that, with our Emperor," said Jakof; "I believe he would have flogged the whole regiment rather than have let that man escape—and what can escape, that he is determined to find out."

"He leads you all, gentlemen," said Lesseps, "*à la baguette*, and on my soul I think he is right. I have heard that the stick was made for the

Russian, and the Russian for the stick. I do not find him a bad fellow on the whole, your Nicholas; he is a good companion in his way; only curse all his police spies and followers. If you meet him in the street, Count, cut him dead as I do; there are always dozens of them dodging his heels in some disguise or other; and as they have a law to punish whoever addresses the Emperor in the street, whenever it happens that he speaks to you they pounce upon you the instant that his back is turned, and lock you up till they ascertain the next day, whether you were spoken to, or the speaker. Good bye, Monsieur le Comte, I am glad to have met so charming a compatriot. Good bye, gentlemen all; your time's your own, but I must be off to my palette and easel."

"I follow you," said Jakof.

"A worthy couple of Bœotians," observed the host as the door closed; "Jakof is I suppose the greatest fool, and Lesseps the coarsest hound and the best painter in St. Petersburg; I see he has got on lately."

"Oh! nobody likes him," said Durakoff; "but then he has that about him which passeth

all personal attraction—the perfume of imperial favour."

"Well, Dimitri, what now?" exclaimed Isaakoff to his servant, who having filled his pipe, remained silent and motionless before him with his head sunk on his breast, in that singular manner which seems the result of an anatomical peculiarity in the Muscovites, and which, according to Lesseps, arises from an additional vertebra in the neck, with which, by a merciful dispensation of Providence, this race, doomed so abjectly and incessantly to bow, has been endowed.

"My Lord," replied Dimitri, "Vasili Petrovitch, the fruiterer; the very humblest of your slaves, begs that he may be allowed to see you."

"Vasili Petrovitch, whose name I never heard before, is a modest scoundrel," said Isaakoff; "I have my intendants, my household servants to the number of seven score, and I suppose two or three hundred wealthy serfs besides established in this city, all anxious to see me; and your modest Vasili Petrovitch only wants an im-

mediate interview, forsooth at a moment's warning! I won't see him, but I will note him down to raise his obrok; he must be a liberal fellow and well to do in the world. What did he give thee, Dimitri, to bring me such a message?"

Dimitri, in whose pocket a hundred rouble note had just been deposited, turned to the corner of the room, and not finding there the image, which is only excluded from the most fastidious apartments, he turned his eyes towards the ceiling, and beating his breast compunctiously, as if to say, "Oh Lord! bear witness to the truth of thy servant a miserable sinner," he confidently answered; "Vasili Petrovitch gave me nothing, but he promised me his blessing, and he mentioned that he had an offering to make."

"His offering will keep."

"He says not; it is for my Lord's breakfast."

"For breakfast, Dimitri? that changes the face of affairs; let your Vasili Petrovitch in; whether or no he be a man of sense, he has had the wit to guess the only proposition I would just now listen to."

The door opened and an old man stood

before them; his hair was dense and grey, his beard patriarchal. He was dressed in a sordid and threadbare caftan, a sort of bed-gown-looking vestment of blue cloth, girded round by a faded red-brown sash, and reaching almost to his feet, which were cased in boots pulled over his trousers. He threw himself prostrate before the Prince.

"Oh John, the son of John! oh my father!" said the old man to the young one, kissing his slippers, "now that my late master is a saint in heaven, what a happiness to look upon his son."

"A live master is worth two dead saints," replied the Prince; "but tell me, Vasili Petrovitch, are you a wealthy first or second guild merchant?"

"Oh John, the son of John! I am indeed rated as a first guild merchant, and mine enemies say that I am rich, the Lord forgive them for their falsehood; but if I am rated as a first guild merchant, it is because, according to the capital we declare, is the amount of the tax we pay for our merchant's licence; and ac-

cording to the tax we pay is the guild in which we are rated, and, in consequence, the credit we enjoy. For this credit's sake I have struggled hard to pay the first guild licence; but so help me, the holy Saint Sergius, who spoke out when he came an infant from his mother's womb, this next year I must sink into the second guild, even if that my poverty will allow me to keep beyond the third. Many of us are there, in these hard times, oh John, the son of John, who deceive our dread Lord Nicolas, the son of Paul, by paying first guild fees when we have not capital to qualify us for the third. The Lord forgive our sin!"

"I'll swear that Nicolai Paulovitch (Nicholas the son of Paul) would willingly see you all sin so; but what have you brought me?"

"My father," continued the old man, "I rent a salmon fishery off the Krestovsky island, to my loss and sorrow; and this day lo! I believe my patron saint, St. Sergius, sent into the fisher's nets a sturgeon, the first that has been caught these two years in the Neva. He is plump and full of roe. I have caused him to

be brought with me, that my Lord may eat what money will not purchase in this season, fresh *ekra* for his breakfast."

"Thank you, Vasili Petrovitch; but go away now; I will remember you," said the Prince; and then he added maliciously, "I am glad to learn you are so well to do in the world. Now, gentlemen," said he turning to his friends, "you have heard, and of course you breakfast with me."

"Fresh ekra and the company of Isaakoff are visitors not to be resisted," said Lochadoff.

"Particularly the ekra," observed the Prince.

"It is true," said Durakoff, "that Isaakoff's company will keep, and the ekra will not."

"That is true," returned Lochadoff; "I can form a shrewd conjecture that the inheritor of such a fortune will not readily get permission to spend it, where they say he has squandered so much by anticipation."

"Dimitri," said the Prince, "let that fish be brought up to the breakfast-room; and now, men, let us pay our respects to the ekra."

"And what after all is ekra?" inquired Horace.

"Ekra, my dear fellow, is supposed to be the ambrosium of the pagan gods. It is brought in winter some thousands of miles, by relays of post horses travelling day and night, to reach our tables fresh, which it only does with the kind assistance of the cold and salt. Ekra is what in the west you call caviar, when you get it dried, pressed, salted, tainted, and spoiled."

Count Horace had scarcely time to observe that everything on the breakfast table—the wedgwood ware, the glass, the cutlery, the very plate, were English; when the doors were thrown wide open, and eight domestics appeared bearing in a cloth and blanket, a heavy weight. It was Vasili's enormous sturgeon, still living, as appeared by the feeble lashing of its tail.

The fish was followed by the Russian cook, bearing a huge wooden bowl, and armed with a sharp knife, whilst another domestic carried an antique punch-bowl, and the dwarf Archib followed at his heels.

"Look what a magnificent fish! How much roe is there in him think you, cook?"

The cook patted the fish on the belly and looked at it with the eye of a connoisseur, "a poud and a quarter, or a poud and a half—say fifty-five pounds."

"Ay," said the dwarf, who seemed singularly alive to this proceeding, "only a poud and a half—I could eat that all myself with *blinees*."

At this sally there was a laugh.

"*Blinees* are the buckwheat pancakes we eat with caviar at Easter," said the Prince.

"Now, cook, work away," he continued; "and you, my dear Horace, you are going to assist at a feast that would make any man's mouth water in the Empire."

The cook having thus received the signal, proceeded dexterously to rip up the exhausted fish, which gave a last convulsive bound.

"Be quiet," said the eager dwarf, patting the fish, "the master has ordered it; it will be worse for you."

Then the operator began to take out the roe

by handfuls, and to empty it into the wooden bowl. The roe consists of grains about the size and colour of hemp seed, but semi-transparent, and agglutinated together by a fluid resembling castor oil.

"This is the celebrated ekra," said the Prince.

The china bowl being half filled, and some salt scattered over it, Count Lochadoff at once took a spoonful on his plate and began eagerly tasting it; "It is perfection," said he. "You have no ekra in the West; it is almost enough to keep one in Russia."

"Come, Horace, you do not eat," said the Prince.

"Eat," echoed Horace.

"Yes, eat man, only taste it."

"Oh! for heaven's sake give me a glass of brandy," replied Horace; "the sight is enough for me."

"What not taste! Oh prejudice, prejudice! only look how fresh and tempting it looks," said the Prince, as with his fork he separated a few bloody veins, and a piece or two of film, and having

peppered it, took his first mouthful just as the monster who had furnished the repast was borne out, showing that vitality was not quite extinct, by a faint lashing of his tail against the folding doors, as the dwarf eagerly thrust his little arm to scrape out a handful of the roe still adhering to the integuments.

"Why you look pale!" said the Russians laughing.

It was true; Horace, instead of brandy, had helped himself hastily to Doppel Kummel, a liquor from the Baltic province, a sort of corn brandy syrup, rankly flavoured with fennel—congenial to the stomachs which do not reject the ekra.

"Do you know," said Isaakoff, "that ten years hence you will almost feel inclined to return to us for the sole purpose of eating this delicious food. I never yet knew a foreigner who was not disgusted with the sight of it, or who did not end by becoming fonder of it than the Russians."

"Unless he never tasted it," observed Horace.

"If you prefer it salted and pressed, there is some of the dry caviar."

"Not any way," said Horace; "it reminds one of an African abomination. I have read that somewhere in Darfour or Kordofan there is a lake of which the waters, stagnating in the summer's sun, become literally thickened with maggots, which are drained, salted, dried, pressed into cheeses, and must bear no slight resemblance to your salted caviar."

"Well!" said Isaakoff, "it is well that we are not all so bigoted; you will find nearly all the other dishes from your own kitchen. Here, let me recommend to you a double snipe: it is a bird you have not, between the size of snipe and woodcock, but combining the juiceness and flavour of the snipe and quail; they are now fat and in full season; or here you have patties of the Neva salmon."

"Salmon patties! what are those grains in them looking like transparent amber-coloured rice?"

"Oh! that is the sinew of the sturgeon cut

into small pieces; the rest are your own French dishes."

"Oh! no," said Lochadoff, "I see! this is our famous national soup in the summer; try it and tell me if you ever tasted anything more exquisite."

"What! cold soup! God bless me!" said Horace as he found bits of cold fish and lumps of ice floating about in a green liquid, which tasted like mint sauce deluged with water and filled with chopped parsley. "If I did not know how much tastes vary, I should say that this had been mixed in the wildest caprice of a drunken cook."

"It is our celebrated batvinia."

"Ah!" said Horace, "I once tasted what the Spaniards call a gaspacho, and thought it the most villanous thing of that description possible; but I beg their pardons—I had not tried your batvinia then. But where is your wine? I see the choicest vintage of Spain, and Portugal, and France, and Germany; but have you not got admirable Russian wines?"

"Have we?" said Durakoff, "I never tasted them, though I have seen them written up over low taverns and disreputable wine-cellars."

"My dear Horace," said Isaakoff, "I desire you to hold a better opinion of our native wines than you would if you tasted them. Some of the best are mixed with common cape or coarse Bordeaux to improve their flavour; our Russian wines, I am afraid, are like our Russian literature; no one tastes the one who can afford anything better, or relishes the other who can read a foreign tongue. I do not say that there are not untried districts of our boundless territory whose soil may not at some future period produce an excellent beverage, or brains full of thought and originality; but hitherto the productions of either have only been tolerated through a large infusion of foreign spirit, and in imitation of foreign excellence. Such fellows as Durakoff and Lochadoff are always utterly ignorant of both, unless, indeed, they happen to have estates and vineyards in the south, and then they

sometimes manufacture champagne and Burgundy, by adding two thirds of the real wine to the trashy produce of their own vines."

"A profitable speculation, truly," said Count Horace.

"The most profitable vintage in the world at times," rejoined the Prince, "when employed as a delicate flattery to our Emperors. Supposing our Emperor to read in the journal published by Count Horace de Montressan: 'This day we tasted the champagne grown upon Prince Isaakoff's estate, a wine little, if anything inferior to our own, affording us fresh proof that this favoured soil is fitted for the most choice and varied produce.' Do you think Prince Isaakoff will have laid his account unprofitably. A bad speculation, forsooth! when instead of one's name being brought on the tapis by a snarling courtier, it comes uppermost as the man who has curbed the unyielding soil to the imperial will, when it has said, let there be Chambertin, let there be Sillery, and the rebellious vines have only grown our sour Donskoi. But, praise your stars, Isaa-

koff has no vineyards. So now, my dear Horace, don't hold back your glass; that which I gave you is the best imported."

"It is capital; the last arrival of Cliquot's, I suppose," said Lochadoff.

"Hear them!" exclaimed the Prince. "Such are your Russians when their ideas are unenlarged by travel—such when they have not chipped their eggshell. From Lochadoff down to a money-changer's boy, there is not one of them who will taste a bottle of Champagne unless he sees the name of Cliquot or of Jaquesson branded on the cork."

"I have always heard," said Horace, "that there is more champagne drank in Russia than is grown in France."

"On the contrary," replied the Prince, "there is no country to which the observation less applies, for the very reason I have mentioned: everything without one of these known marks they brand as imitation, and consequently, whilst these marks ensure its reality, they prevent its excellence, because they are notoriously sufficient to sell the wine. Thus

Cliquot and Jaquesson mix up their Champagnes, good, bad, and indifferent, into one common mixture, three degrees below mediocrity, and sweetened for the Russian palate; and thus, whilst there is none utterly bad, as our people stick to their marks, there are not twenty tables in the Empire where you get it good."

"And your's is certainly one of them," said Horace. "The account you give reminds me of the Dutchmen with their claret; for you know Bordeaux is their staple drink, as Schiedam is their staple dram. If you give a Dutchman the finest Lafitte he tells you he prefers Lemoine-Ludon, or Madame-vous-regarde—names fabricated like the wines in Holland, but which he devoutly believes to be of foreign production. Most men are obstinate when bent on being deceived; but a Dutchman is the personification of obduracy, for if he were not, the honesty of wine dealers might undeceive him, who boldly stick up upon their sign, 'Manufactory of every sort of foreign wines.'"

"And now," said Durakoff, "I drink to the welcome of Isaakoff back to Petersburg."

"Drink rather," said Lochadoff, "to his speedy departure. I wish to God you were drinking to mine. Here's to your Paris, Monsieur le Comte. Oh Paris! Paris! Paris! city of the heart!"

"And here," said Isaakoff, "I drink a hearty welcome to Count Horace:—long may he stay amongst us, and never wish to leave us whilst he does."

"Ah! happy fellow!" rejoined Lochadoff, "he has only to wish it! But tell me, Count, how do you like our country?"

"Gentlemen," said Horace, who had quaffed more deeply of the champagne than, considering his last night's potations, he at first intended, and who had some indistinct recollections of English toasts and formal thanksgivings in set speeches floating in his mind, "Gentlemen, unless I were the most ungrateful of beings, received as I have been in it, I must be delighted with your country. But quite independently of

this feeling of gratitude, there is much which has pleased, impressed, and struck me in Russia. I once remember being full of prejudice against every thing English; but visiting their country, I learned to admire almost everything I had condemned before I came to understand it, because it shocked my preconceived ideas. This I am sure will be the case with me in your own country. Already, turning from western Europe, where successful revolutions and the inroads of a democratic spirit reducing society to a monotonous uniformity, have rooted out so many hallowed institutions, I find it refreshing to see still flourishing and healthy the loyalty, the piety, the venerable associations, which with us are either passing away or are already things of the past. I long to see more of the half feudal, half paternal, rule of your barons, over happy and devoted serfs, softened down in all that was harsh and grating by the highest polish of your actual civilization. Already, though I have scarcely had time to put together my impressions, it seems as if I had around me all gathered into one confused and

dazzling picture—the costume, manners, buildings, of the poetic Orient—the Tartar mosque—the Asiatic robe—the Oriental salutation—the middle ages mingling with the East—the feudal Lord—his serf—his dwarf—his castle—the deep devotion of the pilgrim, and that long since departed loyalty which gave its heart up to a lady-love, its life unto the sovereign, and its soul to God! All this it seems as if I saw around me, mixed with the martial splendour of our warlike empire, and tempered by the graces of the old regime—the brightest polish of the new."

Here Prince Isaakoff yawned, and Lochadoff asked for a toothpick, hints which Count Horace took very kindly, and so his speech and the *séance* ended together.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DUSTY carriage drove up to the post-house of Strelna. It was drawn by six lean horses, with long ragged manes, and shaggy fetlocks; all harnessed abreast, and driven by a bearded peasant, dressed in a brown caftan, and low crowned felt hat. Blanche and Mattheus alighted from it.

"We are now," said the latter, "only a few miles from St. Petersburg."

The aspect indeed of the road, and of the post-house at which they had stopped, was very different from any thing Blanche had yet seen. The road itself was straight as a line, of magnificent

width, beautifully macadamised; and ever and anon there arose along it little pillars of dark polished marble, with gilt letters carved on them, and raised on the summit of little monuments of granite, as verst stones, to mark the distance from the city.

Hitherto all the post-houses they had stopped at had been built on one regular plan, in every respect resembling each other, and bearing in their uniformity and arrangement much of the character of caravanserais; but this being a place of resort for visitors from the capital, and for travellers to and from the imperial residence of Peterhoff, bore all the appearance of a spacious inn, being only distinguished as a post-house by the Black Imperial double Eagle painted on a board, and by a post with the diagonal stripe of black, white, and red, which marks all government property.

On the other side of the road were the grounds of the summer palace of one of the grand dukes, in which the foliage of different trees, as planted by an English landscape gar-

dener, formed a pleasant relief to the hitherto unbroken monotony of pine and birch woods which had intervened as they came along.

The travellers were first received by a sort of ostler, clad in a home-spun robe of the coarsest grey woollen cloth; his head was covered by an old wolf-skin cap, almost bare of fur, and which, when he removed it, shewed a head almost as bald of hair,—apparently the result of some recent and violent illness, which his pale and hollow cheeks betokened, for he was not past thirty.

They were conducted to a public apartment on the first floor, by another waiter, habited in a sort of coloured cotton shirt, worn over a pair of very wide black velveteen trousers, which were tucked into his boots below the knee.

His dense and greasy locks were parted in the middle, and kept down by a leather strap, which, encircling his head, served as a "*féronnière*." His whole appearance was cringing and unctuous.

The public room was spacious and uncarpeted, and a prominent object, as in all other Russian rooms, was the winter stove, or "*pech*,"

—a bulky stack of bricks, about the size of an ordinary table, but nearly as high as the ceiling, covered externally with white glazed tiles, and ornamented by the brass handles of the flue-regulators, and by the small figured door of cast-iron, which allowed the replenishment of a little oven, about the size of a bandbox, in the centre of the pile.

The furniture consisted of sofas, chairs, commodes, and tables of very darkly-stained mahogany, with a due sprinkling of spitting-boxes, and a bundle of pipe-sticks in every corner,—excepting one, which was graced by the image of the patron saint,—beneath the gaudy frame of which burned a wick, floating in olive oil, and suspended in a lamp of brass by a triple chain.

There is a something singularly barbaric about the gaudy finery of these universal Russian penates.

The various holy individuals from which one is invariably selected as the tutelary of every room, are always painted according to a standard of conventional hideousness, copied from old and popular images, the rudest efforts of untutored

art, which are held by the Russian Church as sacred likenesses on account of their antiquity. The picture is besides covered and hidden by a sheet of embossed metal, plated or gilt, in which three holes are cut, so as just to display the face and hands portrayed upon the canvass beneath it; the gold and silver being intended to represent the vestment, and the halo of glory of the saint. The picture, with its metallic casing, is surrounded by a deep frame of alternate mahogany and gilding, and covered with a sheet of glass. The mingled gaudiness and monstrosity of the image, and the frequent adoration of all who come into the apartment, remind one strongly of Asiatic idols.

Blanche felt startled and shocked when she saw her husband devoutly bow before the image like the others, though a momentary reflection, bringing to her remembrance the incognito he was so desirous of maintaining, staid the ejaculation of surprise upon her lips.

At the request of Mattheus they were shown into a private room, for it was not his intention to enter St. Petersburg till evening.

Since last introduced to the reader, a considerable change had taken place in the appearance of Mattheus. The lines of his harassed features had taken all those scarce perceptible curves which mark so visibly the pressure of deep and anxious thought upon the human countenance; and partly because reflecting *his* anxieties, partly because their nature had never been confided to her, the face of Blanche too was sad and clouded, and her eyes swam in tears as she looked upon him, when leaning his head on his arms, he sat down gloomily at the table.

At length her hand sought his, and clasped it with a gentle pressure.

"Oh, dearest," she said, "you know I have never murmured yet, I have never yet complained."

"Blanche!" interrupted the husband, starting up, and putting his finger to her lip, "do you forget—your solemn—solemn—promise?"

"Forget it!" said the wife,—"oh, no! by day and night its recollection haunts me; it has sealed my lips when my heart has been suffo-

cating, and when my brain has reeled as it does now. Oh, Mattheus! dearest! unbind me from that terrible vow, and let me give unfettered utterance to my thoughts for one short hour, though you should bind my tongue in silence ever after!"

"Speak!" replied Mattheus, after a moment's silence.

"Oh! if I speak," said Blanche, "you must not think that the impatient curiosity of the woman speaks in me; intense as it may be within my bosom, regarding the being I love so fondly, yet, of whom I only know that, like an angel-vision, he has appeared—enrapturing and delighting, and teaching this poor heart to admire—to love, to idolize—whilst, of whence he comes, of whither he is going—of his plans, and hopes, and fears—I know no more than if he were the unreal visitant of a vision! I do not speak, Mattheus, because in my sleep, when my dreams reproduce the terrible presentiments of my waking hours, I sometimes fancy that you have vanished for ever from my side—like a shade that leaves no trace in the air it came

through, or track after it has departed, on the earth it has left; and not because I wake from such a dream, to find thy bosom heaving in a slumber, troubled by anxieties which I cannot share, but a slumber so restless and disturbed that after I have wept over it I awaken thee with my kisses. Oh! no! all this would not have made me speak, when I know so well that speaking pains the husband of my bosom, though it is a pain I cannot comprehend. But I speak because a nameless dread comes over me, that as we are approaching St. Petersburg we are hastening towards some eventful yet uncertain crisis of our destiny—uncertain, because I see sometimes a ray of hope light up thy countenance; but oh! how much more frequently it is pervaded by the gloom and the disquietude which increases as we hurry towards the fatal city."

"Dear Blanche," said Mattheus taking her hand and looking full into her blue eyes, "do you remember when, on the eve of our wedding night, I came to you in my travelling dress—insensate that I was!—to take a last fond look,

and then for ever quit you—insensate, to have faced again the temptation I had vanquished by a superhuman effort! Do you remember, Blanche, how resolute my love had grown, never to interweave your fate with the dark and tangled web of mine? Did I not warn you that my past must be like things whose irrecoverable trace is lost for ever in the night of time? Did I not warn you that my future was dreary, clouded, and uncertain; that my name, my family, my country, must all be, for whoever I should marry, as if they had no existence? And then do you remember, Blanche, how, intoxicating my reason, you drove me into crime—the crime of mixing up your destiny with mine—by passionately declaring that even if I had been like the magician, whose beloved was consumed to cinders in his arms, you would still fly into mine if they were open to you, and gladly perish there? Do you remember how, regarding my home, my name, my history, or my country, you said you were indifferent, so you only knew I loved you?"

"I remember it," said Blanche, "as one

remembers the strongest terror, the most vivid joy of one's existence, the prospect of despair, and the glimpse of heaven crowded into a short half hour. And never—never—never for an instant have I regretted my resolution; though indeed my time has since been filled with many inward sorrows, shapeless, and vague, and indistinct, as mirrored, dear Mattheus, in my heart from thine. But oh! if I speak now, I speak because I feel that there is danger for thee in the Russian capital, a danger which may not be inevitable, which may, perhaps be yet avoided. Dearest Mattheus, let us turn away from it—there is yet time."

"Blanche, dear Blanche, there is nothing to dread," said the husband.

"Oh do not think to deceive me! Is not the terrible foreboding of some unknown evil sufficiently confirmed to me by thy anxieties, by the fears which thou canst not conceal, and which agitate so profoundly the good, the brave, the talented, the gentle? Oh! Mattheus, let us fly from the hidden evil, and I will never seek to penetrate its mystery. Perish thy name,

thy family, thy fortune, all that can tempt thee to adventure the peril which I feel is menacing thee! what are they all to me when weighed against thy safety? My humble fortune has hitherto satisfied all our wants, thy love has made my happiness, and thou hast always said that I was everything to thee. Come, Mattheus, I implore thee hearken to my foreboding; let us turn away from this fearful city. Thou canst not tell in what gloomy colours recur to my memory the fate of the conspirators of whom thou hast formerly spoken so much; the secret and silent horrors of the terrible despotism which I feel that thou hast offended, and to whose mercies I am sure thou art now about to trust. Oh! has not thy Blanche loved thee enough without a name, a home, a family! Would she not love thee if thou hadst been born in the humblest rank of life, and thus without one. Oh! come, I implore thee, let us turn back on our westward road, and, abandoning thy dangerous dream, resign ourselves to love, to peace, and to contentment."

"And lead you back the wife of a nameless, fortuneless adventurer; for I have told you that my fortune depends upon this journey."

"Oh! Mattheus, do not let my love hurt thy pride, when it only speaks out in the excess of its devotion. It is thee that I worship, as thou art, in soul, in body, and mind; and when I say that I should not have valued thee less if thou hadst been born a peasant, I speak in all the conscious pride of belonging to a race for centuries illustrious, and with the instinct that in thee it has not been mis-allied. Dost thou think that my sympathy does not trace it in that indescribable nobility of expression, in all the peculiarities which stamp thy words, thy actions, and thy manner, in the very prominence of the deep blue veins through thy tender skin, and the rapidity with which thy lordly blood flows in its impetuous pulsations, in the feminine smallness of thy hand, and in the bold, wild freedom of thine eye? Oh! it is because I doubt so little of thy illustrious lineage, that I may well be careless of knowing farther respecting it. As to thy fortune—oh!

let mine suffice. Come, dearest, let us fly, and be as we have been, all in all to each other."

"But who says, dear Blanche, that there is any danger?"

"Can I not read thine eyes, thy voice, thy countenance, thy lip, which quivers even now?"

Here Mattheus buried his face in his hands; and then after an interval, he said:

"And can you think only of danger? Have you never thought that it might be remorse at having yielded to the sweet temptation, and linked my fate, unhappy Blanche, with thine? Oh! Blanche, pity me, pity me! And yet perhaps an hour hence you will give me, unasked, that scornful pity which I dread."

"Mattheus, dear Mattheus, this is madness."

"It is worse than madness. Imagine if you can one of the damned, who wandering far from the profoundest depth, the deepest slough of his eternal prison house, has seized with all the recklessness of an immortal misery, upon the hand which an angel has proffered in its unsus-

pecting purity and innocence. Imagine what the wretched child of perdition feels as the hour approaches, when the angelic being must turn from him with its smile of love, changed into loathing, and contempt, and horror, as starting back with its prismatic wings, scorched by the burning blast, it sees by its infernal light the loathsome, hideous feature of the lost—lost child of sin."

"And how," said Blanche, with beaming and enthusiastic eyes, "should I imagine what could never happen? Love, real love, would not perceive the change, however hideous, in the being loved. Love, real love, even in an angel's breast, would moth-like, court the flame; and love too would forgive what Heaven itself had not forgiven!"

"How strange," mused the husband, as clasping his hands he gazed with an intensity of admiration into his wife's face, as if to sun himself in the last looks of her affections; "how strange, that I should still regard my transgression with such rapture, whilst its consciousness

weighs me down to the earth. You smile now and you forgive in the abstract; but if you knew all, Blanche!"

"What need I," said Blanche, throwing her arms around his neck, "when with the poet

> I know not, I care not, if guilt's in that heart;
> But I know that I love thee, whatever thou art."

"Oh!" exclaimed the husband, "not exactly guilt, except it be the guilt of having entangled my Blanche in a fate, over which I never had control, for good or evil. As for the danger, calm all apprehensions; to-morrow you shall know all; it would pain me now too much to tell; but trust me, that in three short weeks, with a moderate fortune, if still without a name or rank, or station, we will repass this road upon our westward course; and believe me I shall find the inspiration in thy tried enduring love, to work out, in the wide world which lies before us, a name my Blanche may yet be proud to bear."

"You would not deceive me?" said Blanche, dubiously; "for remember, dearest, if danger be

there and unavoidable, then dread no sighs or tears from me; the very terror which my tenderness inspires will give me courage. Besides, the race I come of never knew fear, when the men belonging to it hated, or when its women loved. My blood will not shame thine, however noble. But if the danger may be yet averted, why not fly? And if there be no danger, why that clouded, anxious brow?"

"It is clouded, Blanche, because to-morrow thy love, if not extinguished, may perhaps be cooled; and that I dread to think on."

"Never," interrupted Blanche.

"Oh," continued Mattheus, "love is like health—how can we say it will last? And then there is cause for anxiety; because our fate hangs on the single will of an individual. He is indeed one of the best, most generous, and noblest of mankind, all powerful by a single word to stamp our destiny. I hold his solemn promise here, and never did he break his mighty word, in the most trivial thing; but still he is a weak and erring mortal like myself."

Here, as if to stop all further conversation on

the subject, Mattheus pressed his white lips to his wife's pale brow, and went out into the public room.

When Blanche was alone, as she looked round the apartment, her attention was arrested by an engraved and coloured portrait of the Emperor, which adorned the walls.

Although her eyes an hour before had wandered over it indifferently, she now traced with intense curiosity every lineament of those features, which, after all, perhaps the artist's flattery or caprice or want of skill had altered in a thousand ways from the original. But it was because the temper which they indicated had acquired a terrible interest for her now, an interest which, until that moment, as an Englishwoman, she had never understood.

Oh! thought Blanche almost audibly; although a little harsh and stern in its expression, it is a noble face; and at least if he will not err upon the side of mercy, he will be just; and what can the gentle, good, and generous Mattheus want but justice? But then how do men agree in their ideas of justice?

And as she mused, she remained in contemplation before the picture, and insensibly had joined her hands in supplication.

If one could have seen through the walls which divided the apartments, it would have been strange to observe within a few feet, an old Russian, with his face towards her, in a precisely similar attitude. He was a greasy merchant who, having slept off his last night's copious supper on one of the sofas, wrapped up his feet in a couple of rags, drawn on his boots, and paid his bill, being about to awaken his companion, was first offering up an earnest prayer to the image of St. Sergius, to protect him by not allowing the other to discover, by the sober light of morning's reason, that he had been cheated in a sale of hides on the preceding night; and as a consideration the petitioner humbly offered to the saint to burn for fourteen days the purest oil of the olive in his lamp—and he was really quite incapable of cheating his patron in its quality.

The reader might also have recognised in this person, our friend Vasili Petrovitch, who had

furnished the sturgeon for Prince Isaakoff's breakfast.

The habitual reserve of Mattheus, at certain times, and on certain subjects, had taught Blanche to respect the moody silence into which he relapsed on returning to her; though some times, as if the brighter side of his position turned uppermost as he revolved it in his mind, he made frequent and successful efforts to rally, though studiously avoiding all allusion to their previous conversation. They had breakfasted and dined, and watching the passing vehicles, were sitting at the open window, awaiting the hour at which he had proposed that they should pursue their journey.

"You see," observed Mattheus, who to conceal the excitement under which he laboured, was ever recurring to the most indifferent topics, "that our Russia is not quite a land of eternal snows; it is seldom hotter on the shores of the Mediterranean than it is to day. You see we have fruits too of our own; this melon from Tambof, these transparent apples from the Crimea, and these enormous raspberries—our

northern regions are the land of the raspberry—which you have never eaten in the same perfection in a more temperate climate."

While speaking, their joint attention was attracted by a shabby droshky which entered the yard. There alighted from it a hatchet-faced individual, one of those employed in some department of the Civil Service, and known under the general appellation of *Chinovniks*, or men of rank. He was accoutred in the pale grey cloak worn alike by every commissioned officer in the Imperial Service, from the field-marshal down to the lowest clerk. When he removed it he displayed, instead of a military uniform, a sort of dress coat of rifle green, with gilt buttons stamped with the imperial arms, and a collar of light-coloured velvet; his head was surmounted by an ordinary black silk hat, a little rusty in the nap, and very much battered at the edges.

"Ah," said he as the pale ostler in the wolf-skin cap stepped forward, "so thou art here."

"The Lord have mercy on us," muttered the

peasant, prostrating himself at his full length to kiss the stranger's feet, whilst the fat waiter only bowed, although profoundly, and bringing out, as ordered, a glass of spirits and a lighted pipe, looked as if expecting payment on delivery.

"What dost thou here?" said the Chinovnik to the still prostrate ostler.

"Oh, my father, I am at service."

"So when I thought thou wert in the hospital thou art here, rogue! earning good wages! Where is thy obrok? Thou owest me three months of it—five and forty roubles."

"Oh! my father, I have indeed been very ill. It is true I have been in this place six weeks; but hitherto I only serve here for my keep. Look at my arms," said the slave, as he pulled up the sleeves of his caftan, and shewed the thin skeleton-like limbs, to the bones of which the skin seemed adhering, "who will give me any wages to work with these?"

"Come," said the Chinovnik, who seemed a little mollified, "I will take five and twenty roubles, and give thee a month for the remainder."

"Oh my father! by the Almighty! I have not, as I hope for salvation, five-and-twenty kopeks. It is a hard struggle, very hard, to pay a monthly tax of fifteen roubles, even when one can work and get work; but when a violent illness overtakes one, as it has overtaken me, I must beseech of your merciful nobility to wait."

"What, rogue! robber! dog! whose mother I have defiled; am I to keep a set of rascals who bring me always excuses, when I want money?"

And here the Chinovnik commenced beating him about the head and shoulders with the cherry-stick tube of his *troubka* or long-pipe. At the fourth or fifth blow it flew out of his hand.

"Fetch it!" roared the master, and the miserable slave crawled to pick it up, and then crouched again like a dog, as his master had said he was; and then the blows redoubled till the cherry-stick flew in shivers; upon which the Chinovnik first kicked him on the face with his heavy boots, and then placing his foot upon his neck, trampled his head down in the dust with all his might.

"Oh my father!" exclaimed the slave, raising himself up and spitting the blood and sand from his mouth.

"What," said the Chinovnik panting for breath, but with some concern in his countenance and in his voice, "I have not surely put out thine eye or knocked thy teeth out? Spit, dog; let us see."

How truthful is the pithy argument of the anti-abolitionists—those practical advocates of the positive rights of property against the vague and abstract rights of humanity—when they ask who can be more interested in the welfare of the slave than his owner! And it was here beautifully illustrated. What did the postmaster or the bystanders heed, whether the slave's eye was blinded or his teeth knocked out or not? But the Chinovnik did, whose property he was, and he examined him anxiously, making him open first one eye, and then the other, and then looking into his mouth through his swelling lips, till, giving him a last vigorous, but careful blow on the side of the head where he could not disfigure him, he bid him take off his caftan.

It was well that Blanche, in horror and disgust, had hidden her face in her husband's bosom, for under the serf's caftan there was not a stitch of clothing ; and the naked, gaunt, and meagre figure, standing with shrunken legs in its wide boots, held up as ordered, the threadbare garment to the light, till the Chinovnik was satisfied that every place of concealment had been visited. He then commanded him to give his knife, and take off his boots.

The slave hesitated for an instant, and then he gave one to his master, who was evidently a practised searcher ; he threw it down after a moment's examination ; but in the other he speedily discovered a scapulary, a little paper of tobacco, and at last the treasure.

It consisted of two silver grivniks or four penny pieces, and a five rouble bank note of tattered coarse blue paper, stitched together with white thread across, and representing a currency of about four and sixpence English.

" Good ! " exclaimed the Chinovnik, appropriating the spoil. " Now this day month, thou shalt bring me five-and-twenty on account ; and

before thou comest to me with it, thou shalt go to the police-station of my quarter, and say I sent thee, for attempting to rob thy Baron, to receive there fifty strokes, which thou shalt also pay for from thine own money; and look that they be well scored on thy back, lest when thou comest to me I make thee return to learn obedience where thou hast been to take a lesson of diligence and honesty."

"I hear, and obey! and humbly thank you, my father, for all these favours."

The Chinovnik drove away, and the poor ostler retired to mend the boot which his master had maliciously slit open.

"Oh what a sight," said Blanche; "it makes my very soul sicken. Who is that monster?"

"A civil officer," replied Mattheus; "I see by the colour of his velvet coat collar that he is employed in the office of the minister of justice."

"Good heavens! of justice! And how dares he trample thus brutally upon that man?"

"Because it is not a man, but a slave."

The face of Mattheus grew pale, and his voice

sounded strange and stiffled with his suppressed emotion.

"And are there no laws to restrain him, dear Mattheus?" said the wife after a pause.

"Oh, volumes and volumes full!"

"And how does it happen thus?"

"Because men break laws even where laws can punish, much less where they cannot reach them—because all the laws which should protect the slave are neutralized—because the slave can never accuse his master, and it is no one else's business; because, if the master injure the slave so that he dies after three days, he goes scot free; and even if he kill him on the spot, as no person above the fourteenth class can be submitted to any corporal punishment without being first degraded, which is only done for offences against the sovereign or the government, the cruel master can only be imprisoned in a monastery. And even this he need not risk, because for a few pence the police will do his bidding, and take all hazard off his hands. This is a fellow

who, probably by long service, has reached beyond the fourteenth class, and acquired the privilege of buying serfs; by the sale of justice he has scraped together a few hundred pounds in bribes of silver pieces, and invested them in four or five unhappy fellow-creatures. A great proprietor is content to take a tribute or obrok of twenty or of forty roubles in the year; but a fellow like this watches them like a cat, and squeezes from them every farthing the poor hacks can earn, thus drawing from them a hundred or two hundred roubles."

"How very horrible! At least thank God that we are not slaves," said Blanche; and then she added: "Oh! for some one to teach them the gentle doctrines of Christianity!"

"Or!" exclaimed Mattheus, whose brow was now flushed, whose eyeballs glared, and who nervously clenched his fist, and set his teeth with the same expression of ferocious menace as when some months before he flung the intruder on his affianced's privacy from the boxes into the pit—"Or, oh for a Spartacus!"

Blanche, in her alarm as she looked at her

husband, and remembered that they were in Russia, forgot for the moment the sufferings of the slave; but as she was stepping into the carriage, the serf was there, with his swollen and yet pallid features still smeared with the traces of his master's brutality; and Blanche putting five gold pieces into his hand, he looked into her beautiful face with vacant and incredulous astonishment. At this moment Mattheus called him to fetch his cloak, and being then beyond the eye of his benefactress, he asked her husband for a *na chai*, or tea money, and greedily secured the silver piece Mattheus offered him. Perhaps the slave remembered that that day month it was exactly the fee he would be called upon to pay at the police station for his own flogging.

Such is the effect of slavery, and in some respects of all oppression; it brutalizes and debases, and then gives rise to the beautiful theory that nothing but the system which has produced it can practically suit such brutality and debasement!

CHAPTER IX.

Count Horace joined in the drawing-room of the Countess de Baval, a group of personages who appeared deep in literary discussion.

The Countess de Baval, a Russian lady married to a Frenchman, had once been masculine looking; but as her flesh had wasted with her vigour, or perhaps her vigour with her flesh, the brown and withered skin on which her diamonds sparkled, the bending figure and the deep set eyes, had rendered her appearance hag-like more than masculine.

Next to her was seated Madame Obrasoff. She was fair; her features were so little marked that one might have compared her

face to a portrait of which the colours were partly effaced, or which was viewed through a mist, or through a glass which you had breathed upon, so little had they of beauty, or deformity, or character, until she smiled or spoke, and then her voice was winning, her colourless eyes were full of softness, and all the graces of expression came to illumine those before unmeaning features.

This lady was not past four and thirty, and yet beside her were two grown up daughters of fifteen and sixteen, Anna and Feodora. The sisters were both tall, and very youthful in their aspect; there was a suppleness about their lithe and slender figures which reminded the beholder, when they moved, of the graceful waving of an ostrich plume, or of some frail and feathery kind of fern when agitated by a passing breeze. They bore all the impress of that precocity, and of its accompanying sickliness, into which Russian children are apt to ripen, where the stove supplies the place of sun, and leads to a factitious, as early as a torrid clime to a natural, maturity. But

though wanting the hue of health, or even purity of complexion, their raven hair, in banbeaus, and their large dark eyes, contrasted strikingly and advantageously with their pallid countenances. Their mouths were small and delicately formed, and their teeth of that small and fragile pearly and transparent description which seldom lasts beyond the early freshness of youth. Their eyes, rendered soft by their long lashes, were slightly obliqued, as is always the case with those Russians who derive their darkness from a Tartar ancestry.

But though the sisters were so strikingly alike in feature and in figure, nothing could be more different than the dispositions which their manner and expression indicated. The eldest seemed a joyous child, full of mingled mirth and sensibility, who had suddenly wakened into womanhood, retaining all the wayward spirit of the girl; the youngest was grave, and thoughtful, and gentle, like her mother.

Next to them sat the Russo-German beauty, Madame Rudiger: tall, fair, and deep-bosomed,

whose Juno-like attractions threw those of the sisters into relief.

"Come, Sir," said Madame de Baval, "we are discussing the merits of French authors; come and help me to defend Châteaubriand."

Horace had taken up a Venetian poignard with a silver handle exquisitely chased, which served as paper-knife, and still balancing it in his hand, he replied:

"Madame, you are fond of antiquities."

"Your answer is two-edged," said Madame Rudiger.

"Oh! I mean literary as well as otherwise," replied Horace, "for Châteaubriand's works have reached a premature antiquation; in fact it is a subject on which you can hardly expect to find a Frenchman fluent, because they cannot be said to belong to either the classic or romantic schools which are now with us the sole theme of discussion."

"And of slashing discussion," observed, with an inward chuckle, a heavy-looking personage, the senator Dimitri Danskoi; for a

Russian can never avoid even the semblance of a pun.

"I shall be overwhelmed if I do not lay down this Benvenuto Cellini," said Horace.

"What! lay down your arms, when you are called on to defend us!" said Madame de Baval.

"I am supporting my literary antiquities against still more remote obsoletions. Here is a partizan who will hear of nothing less antiquated than Voltaire."

"Voltaire will never be antiquated," said the senator.

"No; I am for something more modern; and if our sentiments forbid our going into all the impious extravagances of your recent authors, believe that we do not all wish our literature to be, like our furniture, in the taste of the eighteenth century. Give me the heart and imagination, and the religious inspiration, and the harmony of Châteaubriand; or the romances of the Vicomte d'Arlincourt—"

"Or of Walter Scott," said Madame Rudiger.

"Or Lamartine's poetic meditations," said Madame Obrasoff, of which Horace thought, by

a strange conceit, that she looked the impersonation, as the words flowed like music from her mouth, and a gentle respiration heaved her bosom, almost terminating in a sigh.

"If you are for the sentimental," observed the senator, "I can meet you with the authors of my epoch, as well as in the profound, the witty, and the classic. What can be more pathetically beautiful, than Paul and Virginia?"

"Romeo and Juliet!" said Anna Obrasoff, with a triumphant flash of her bright eyes.

"Ah!" exclaimed Horace. "Well said: we are in the regions now of pathos and of passion. Paul and Virginia is like one of David's pictures: — soft, chaste, and classic; but it is neither life, nor reality. It reads like love ably written of by an old man:—but Romeo and Juliet is love—speaking, and breathing."

"As if written by a lover," observed Anna.

"And how do *you* know?" said Madame de Baval, with prudish severity.

"I guess it," replied Anna, with unconscious simplicity.

"Oh! I beg you to believe," said the mother, "that Anna speaks from intuition, not experience."

"And you, Mademoiselle," said Horace, addressing the youngest, "you have not given us your voice."

"Oh!" said Feodora, softly, "like mamma, I love Lamartine and Xavier le Maistre.

"Oh! his lonely leper of Alost," said Madame Obrasoff.

"You see," said Horace, to the senator, "that the public voice is against you. You will never seduce these ladies to your Télémaque, or to your stately authors in powdered wigs, knee buckles, and three cornered hats,—with all their stiffness, and with all their wit. When we come to understand each other, we are all agreed—we are all of the romantic school:—we had rather feel with Shakespeare, and Byron, and Victor Hugo, and Sue, and Soulié, and Casimir de la Vigne, than admire Racine, or Voltaire, or Corneille, their polished verse, and their inviolate unities."

"Oh, Sir!" said the hostess, "I cry you mercy!—heaven forbid, that we should relish all

your modern impieties—social, moral, and religious. I had hoped that you were too much one of us—too staunch and loyal a legitimatist to have entertained such opinions!"

"Here, Sir," said the senator, "allow me to observe, that you will find the poison poured out to stimulate the depraved tastes of anarchists and atheists, in very little favour. We too have our antagonistic predilections for the classic and romantic schools. We stretch liberality even beyond the bounds of decorum; and in favour of their wit, may even tolerate a Voltaire, or a Diderot, or a Bayle; but we do not countenance the length your revolutionary countrymen go, in outraging all propriety and decency; we do not countenance them by reading them; we abhor too much their tendency."

"Well," replied Horace, "I also am a staunch legitimatist, true to the motto of my house—'for God, and for my king;' but I could never square my literary tastes by my political opinions. It appears to me, that though wit may be pointed, or genius tend in an unhappy direction, it is wit and genius still."

"Besides," said Madame Rudiger, "it is bet-

ter to be sometimes shocked, than always bored and wearied—"

"Oh, yes!" said Anna, "let me read something that makes the heart bound without being told that I should admire."

* * * *

"And then if we turn to Soulié, we find an imagination whose fertility and originality beggar even Victor Hugo's—Soulié, who crowds into one, the plots and action of twenty melodrames and novels—Soulié, who almost disdains, like the old tragedians, the accessories of costume and scenery, and paints a character so vividly in a few laconic sentences."

"It is true," said Madame Rudiger; "in his Memoirs of the Devil, he leads you through eight volumes, as if they were a single chapter; he breaks off incessantly in the middle of a marvellously interesting story, to introduce you to fresh actors, and another plot; and yet, notwithstanding all your disappointment, in two pages more you are so absorbed in the new, as to forget the old, till he brings it again before you by a fresh inversion."

"And then his Devil!" continued Horace, "what poor devils are all ever painted when compared with his: from Byron's baffled fiend, and Milton's proud, magniloquent Lucifer, down to the stupid devils of Le Sage or Goëthe. What bitter irony and what infernal malice almost personify the Prince of Evil in his pages! And yet he introduces this weird and terrible fiend not surrounded by dusty crucibles, or mountains of the Hartz; not amidst sublimities of Alps, or space, or the abyss, or amidst the wreck of worlds — but amidst the common scenes of actual life—in Paris or the provinces; only a year or two ago, and always taking the costumes of every day, and working out his terrible designs by natural agencies. And then there is Sue's "Latréaumont," one of the first historic novels ever written—"*

"Sir," said the senator, "you are talking to me now of novels, a literary monstrosity which I despise."

"And very unjustly," returned Horace, "for

* Translated and published since the above was written under the title of the "Court Conspirator."

the novel has now become the vehicle of publicity for the poet, the dramatist, and even for the politician. The stage was the readiest channel to the public ear in Shakespeare's time; but if Shakespeare had lived in the days of Homer his dramas must have been crowded into an epic poem, and his epic rendered popular in piece-meal song. If he had lived in our own day he must have written a novel. The poet is no longer listened to in verse or on the stage, and the politician not often in the tribune, on the subject on which he may wish to speak; and yet publicity is the vital air of both. They must be heard, and what are they to do if the public will only hear them through the medium of a novel? Thus in England, Bulwer's "Rienzi" and D'Israeli's "Wondrous Tale of Alroy," were poem novels. Even Miss Martineau wrapped up a dry subject in a novel, as a nurse mixes physic in conserve of roses. Thus Gustave de Beaumont preached on slavery in the United States." And Horace might now have added "that thus the poet who had sought an auditory for his poem in one novel,

seeks, as the senator, to disseminate his political opinions in another when he publishes his Conings by."

"But to return to Latréaumont. What can exceed its close adherence to the minutest details of history, the ceaseless interest of its story, and the graphic manner in which every character is realised to the imagination of the reader and imprinted on it afterwards—from Van den Enden the enthusiastic philosopher, and his daughter—from the great Spinosa, down to the ruffianly Latréaumont, and the vacillating Duke de Rohan."

"Ah yes," interrupted Madame Obrasoff, "it is very beautiful. How well I remember the devoted tenderness of Madmoiselle d'O——."

"Or," said her daughter Anna, "that fond father whose son, the youthful chevalier, is led into the conspiracy by his uncle—"

Here Anna met the eye of Madame de Baval; the young girl coloured, and was silent. There was a moment's unbroken pause. At length Horace resumed:

"Oh yes, and then that beautiful picture of

the young widow to whom the chevalier is either affianced or married—who shares in all the conscious dangers into which his promise leads him—who is tortured with him, and dies with him on the scaffold."

Madame Obrasoff made some trivial observation, which she followed by a laugh peculiarly vibrating, silvery, and clear; but the tender liquidity of the glance into which her soft and chamelion-like eyes awakened, showed that it was an effort to laugh off the effect which the recollection of that harrowing scene might produce upon her nervous sensibility.

"Or," continued Horace, "the traitor who denounces Van den Enden—almost his relative."

"Ah," said the senator with some irritation, "was he not conspiring?"

"And you remember," still continued Horace —"for you all seem to have read it—those last touching prison scenes where the author takes the reader by the hand, and leads him into the cells of the condemned, to witness their pre-

paration for eternity. I have never known any one who was not deeply affected by them. Indeed I see that you are all still more or less impressed with the recollection. Now is it not a triumph of art to stir up these emotions ?"

"Sir," said the senator, petulantly, "I can find emotions at command in a galvanic battery. Your Latréaumont is a book immoral in its tendency."

"How so," asked Horace, "when it comes within the verge of English prudery."

"In England," replied the senator, who piqued himself on being at times Voltarian, "I know that they tolerate no printed improprieties out of their bibles ; but your Latréaumont has a pernicious tendency; it trails in the dust a great and august monarch."

"I grant it to you," said Horace ; "but what is more just than that historic truth should pull down Louis XIV. from the pedestal on which the flattery of the authors and poets he protected had raised him? What could they do but panegyrise, when he rewarded so munificently ?

In the succeeding reign of Louis XV. such men as Voltaire still extolled him, as an implied satire on his feeble successor. Voltaire seizing only on the points of contrast of his reign, was no more anxious to display his littleness of heart and mind than, when praising your Empress Catherine, to speak of her murdered husband."

Here the senator started on his chair; but the Count unheeding continued: "If the flattery of court painters represented Louis as a man of majestic stature, because the inordinate height of his wig, and of his high heeled shoes, shewed that he wished to be considered tall, are posterity to believe it after they measured him in his coffin?

"Are we, when we consider that Louis might have forgiven, and had often forgiven when there was danger in striking—are we to blame the author for the effect of merciless harshness, which he has only faithfully described, or for the indignation with which the reader views the bloody and pitiful termination which assuaged his malignant jealousy and his vindictive spirit?"

But as Count Horace ceased speaking, and as

the senator was opening his mouth very wide as if to bring out an enormous exclamation of dissent, a stranger who had joined the group, seized hold of the Count's hand, to his utter amazement, and wrung it violently.

"You are right, Sir," he said with enthusiasm, "there is still ever sitting in the hearts of nations that famous Court of ancient Egypt, which judged the dead king and the departed beggar!"

"Oh! Count Horace de Montressan, let me present to you the spoiled child of the Muses, our Russian Byron," said Madame Rudiger; and then she added, lying very sweetly, "we were just reciting a charming stanza from your Rouslan and Armilda."

"Oh! Madam," replied the poet," any verses would flow charmingly from lips like yours; but your compliments are overstrained, as there will never be but one—there will never be any but an English Byron."

"Ah!" said the hostess, aside to Madame Obrasoff, "what terrible people these Frenchmen are! one is never safe with them, they are capa-

ble of compromising twenty families, for the sake of hearing themselves talk. I pity you, my dear; you have asked him to dine to-morrow at Peterhof. We should both have waited till he was received," and then, she continued aloud "what time did the Emperor arrive to-day?"

"Is the Emperor in town?" inquired the poet.

The senator shrugged his shoulders as if in pity of such ignorance or affectation.

"Of course," replied Madame de Baval; "and he must have arrived before two, for at that hour the imperial standard was flying above the winter palace, and the telegraph working."

"Do you know," observed Madame de Rudiger to Horace, "that he works the telegraph with his own august hands. When you see its black ladders moving, the Emperor is personally transmitting orders to his fleet in the Black sea, or the gulph of Finland, or to his representative in Warsaw, or to his lieutenant in the interior of the Empire. You have not yet seen our Emperor."

"Pardon me," said Horace, "I have both seen and conversed with him."

"Conversed with him!" echoed the bystanders with one accord, for they had all been narrowly watching for his presentation. "Pray tell me where and when?" exclaimed Madame Rudiger, half in astonishment, and half in disbelief.

"This morning," answered Horace, "under singular circumstances."

"Oh, tell us all about it," said Madame Obrasoff, in a tone gently insinuating.

"Most willingly; you must know that I was this morning wandering through the imperial picture gallery of the Hermitage, and I was tempted to visit the atelier of a certain talented countryman of mine, who, making a ladder of his artistic merit, has stepped into the drawing-room from the guard-house; though his manners still savour a little of its coarseness."

"Ah! Lesseps," exclaimed Madame de Baval, but she added, in a tone of profound respect; "the Emperor takes great notice of him."

"Oh, he is a charming painter," chimed in the senator; "there is something very winning in his soldier-like frankness."

"Well!" continued Horace. "You are proba-

bly aware, that the imperial munificence has set aside a room in the Hermitage for the foreign artists."

"We know, and are proud of it," said the senator again.

"In this atelier, then, I was inspecting one of the painter's pictures—a battle scene, full of spirit, in spite of all its Dutch minuteness. But Lesseps himself seemed in ecstacies, over the very insignificant figure of a drummer in the back ground. "I believe," he observed to me, with immense satisfaction, "that no man but myself could have shewn so distinctly what that fellow is doing." I remarked that the action of the drummer was unmistakeable, but that I certainly did not conceive the peculiar merit of its representation. 'Ah!' said the artist with one of his terrific oaths; 'he is beating the drum—any body can shew a drummer striking the parchment—but *what* is he beating?"

I suggested that he should have marked the tune with notes and bars upon the drum.

"'So much for fame!' said Lesseps, throwing down his palette with a comic air of desperation;

'paint for a public which thus appreciates your talent! 'Now Sir,' he continued, 'this is the most striking part of the picture. No drum-major in the world could look upon the position of that drummer's wrists, and not perceive that he was beating the retreat. Just look upon this figure, he said, and then on me,' and he seized a drum and drum-sticks, and began tatooing, for the atelier was like an arsenal, with instruments musical and warlike. First he beat the "Diane," and then the march, and then the retreat; awakening all the echoes of the endless apartments of the galleries. 'Now,' he repeated 'look first on me, and then upon my figure;' but as he paused, we heard to our utter astonishment, behind another easel, the sudden rolling of another drum; and an officer in uniform, a man of colossal stature and imposing aspect, who had entered unperceived, and snatched up another instrument, appeared before us."

"Ah! the Emperor," exclaimed Madame Rudiger.

"Exactly. Lesseps acknowledged his presence by a similar rolling; and for more than twenty

minutes I was deafened by their rattling in emulation of each other on the sonorous parchment."

"'Ah! ah! Lesseps; you did not expect to be rivalled thus,' at length said the Emperor.

"'*Mille bombes*!' replied the artist, 'I did not think there was another man in the empire, out of a drummer's uniform, who could have sustained that vigorous *male* and faultless roll! A foot soldier, Sire, has been made in six weeks. Condé became a general in six months, and in our revolutionary war, we made commanders as quickly as we baked a batch of biscuits. In a word, there have been heaven-born soldiers, and heaven-born generals; and to make an Emperor, a man has only to be born in the purple, as a chicken is hatched in a hen's egg; but who ever saw a heaven-born drummer?'

"'You are right Lesseps,' replied the Emperor, 'we both know that no man on earth could learn to roll with that perfection under a twelvemonth of assiduous practice." And then his Majesty took up a musket, and went rapidly through the exercise.

"'Bravo, Sire!' said Lesseps; 'if fortune had placed you in the ranks like me, you might have chosen your career between drill-sergeant or drum-major. You have the advantage of me in inches: but then, I can not only play the drum, but reproduce the very action of it on the canvass afterwards.'

At this the Emperor laughed good-humouredly.

"'But,' he said, after minutely examining the picture, 'I see a fault, a glaring fault.'

"'I am aware,' replied the painter, 'that that column in the distance is too much softened down. I have passed the *blaireau* over it too often; it does not stand out in sufficiently bold relief. I was going to pumice it out."

"'Not that,' said the Emperor, 'but do you see the dead trooper in the foreground?—the number of his regiment is marked on every button, with the accuracy which renders your pictures so valuable;—but there should be only nine buttons.'

"'Pardon me, Sire,' replied Lesseps, 'but there is the lay figure with the very uniform

upon it, as it is worn now in that regiment; and it has not been changed since then."

"'Oh, I am never wrong in these matters,' said his Majesty; 'the cut and colour of the coat was the same then as now; but the number of buttons has changed since the reign of my father, and the chako is worn an inch and three-eighths higher.'"

Here the senator interrupted Horace with the remark,—"Did you not think of his illustrious ancestor, Peter the Great?—of the comprehensive mind grasping the gigantic whole, and descending, like the all-seeing eye of Providence, into the minutest details?"

"I was struck," replied Horace, "with the colossal figure, the majestic port, the magnificent type of the soldier, with the minuteness of his knowledge of the duty of the sergeant and the drummer, and with the playful good humour with which the absolute sovereign of sixty millions bore with the artist's coarseness."

"And you were saying," observed the hostess, "that you had a conversation with the Emperor?"

"His Imperial Majesty was pleased to notice me; he knew, on hearing my name, exactly how long I had been in St. Petersburg; he examined with me the pictures; we conversed on his gallery of the Hermitage; he desired that I should see his palaces of Zarskoezelo, and of Peterhoff;—and then his Majesty left me, in admiration of his affability, if not of his artistic judgment."

"How very charming!" said Madame Rudiger; "how like the Emperor!"

"I am sure," continued Horace, "that with such urbanity he must be as popular as his father Paul was odious. "Is he better liked than his brother Alexander?"

But the listeners all looked as blank as if a shell had fallen, and was about to burst amongst them.

"Sir," said the senator Danskoi, at length, "you are new to St. Petersburg, or you would know that these are subjects on which we do not dwell. We venerated our beloved Emperor Paul; we were full of love and loyalty towards Alexander; but our humble worship of our

present gracious sovereign is a theme too sacred for discussion."

"It is a subject," said Madame de Baval, "on which delicacy alone would prevent our dwelling, considering that we are all the objects of his bounty."

"All!" repeated, with an accent of deep feeling, a grey-headed old gentleman, with a care-worn countenance, who had been hitherto only a listener; "all! the expression of our gratitude would lead to an importunity of praise."

"All!" chimed in the soft voice of Madame Obrasoff, like a fair devotee's making a response in a Catholic litany.

"Besides, who are we," said the old man, humbly, "that we should venture to praise?"

"Is not the praise of subjects the noblest meed of princes?" asked Horace.

"To praise, almost implies the right to blame," said the senator, "and, thank heaven, our duty teaches us, that our gracious sovereign is not amenable either to our praise or censure."

"Well," thought Horace, "I had better be silent. I was considered an outrageous royalist

in France;—here, I shall pass, it seems, for a republican. The Emperor is a frank, good-natured, and good-hearted fellow enough; he cannot help the sycophancy of these people, who will regard him as man ought only to regard his Maker."

"You will not forget us at Peterhoff to-morrow," said Madame Obrasoff, as she rose to depart.

"Come," said Anna, in the purest English, and in a voice that seemed so ingenuously conscious of persuading, by this monosyllable of half-entreaty, half-command, that Horace yielded at once, still doubting whether it had been prompted by the most finished coquetry, or the most innocent simplicity.

END OF VOL. I.

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